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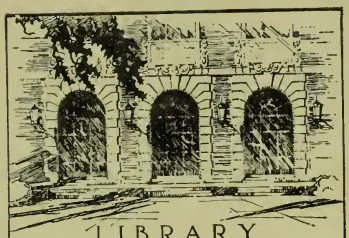

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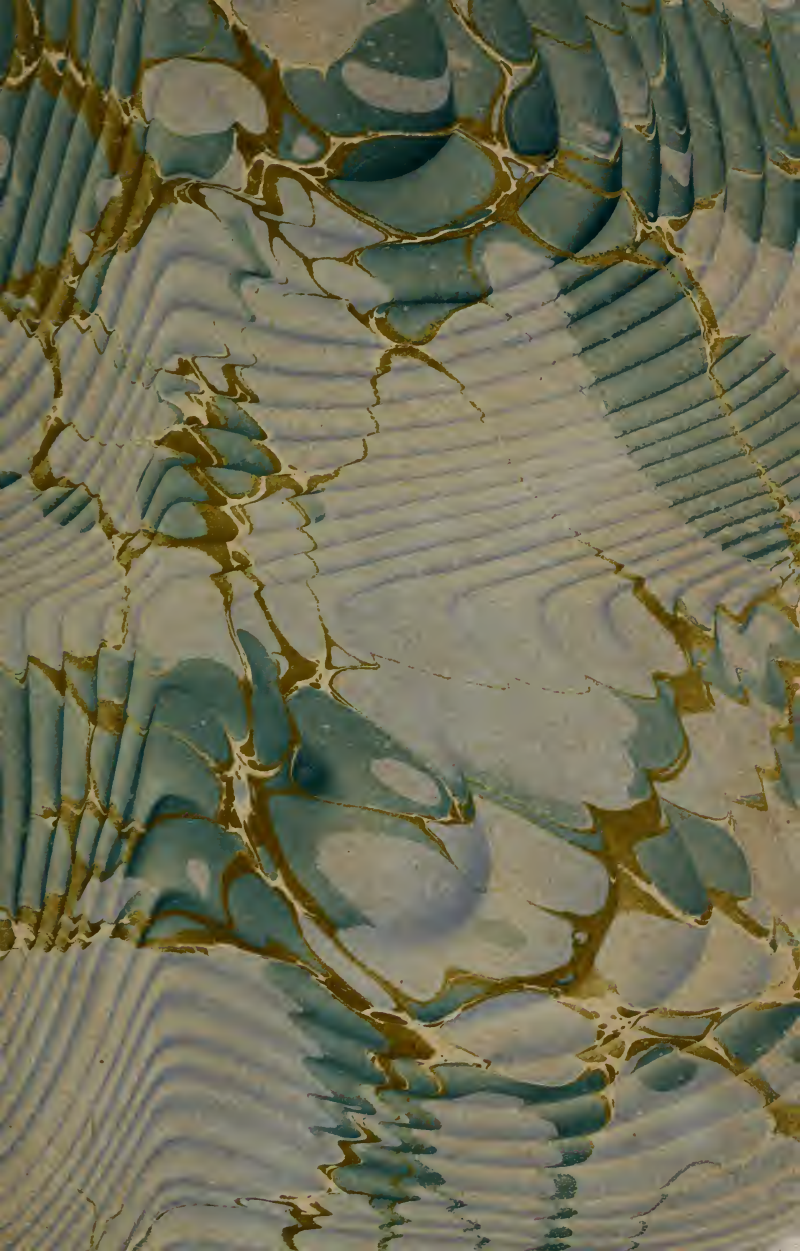

When Charles the First was King.

By J. S. Fletcher,

Author of "The Winding Way," "Andrewlina," "Mr. Spivey's Clerk," etc.

In Three Volumes.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Of the Events which followed ...	1
II.	Of Jack's Letters from the Seat of War	20
III.	Of the Remarkable Conduct of Dennis Watson	38
IV.	Of the Meeting in the Woods ...	56
V.	Of Certain Joyful Events	73
VI.	Of Jack Drumbleforth's Return Home	90
VII.	Of the coming near of War ...	106
VIII.	Of my Ride with the Despatches	120
IX.	Of the Great Fight at Marston Moor	135
X.	Of the Progress of the Fight ...	153
XI.	Of my Meeting with General Cromwell	171
XII.	Of my Adventure at the Wayside Inn	188
XIII.	Of the Departure of Captain Trevor	205

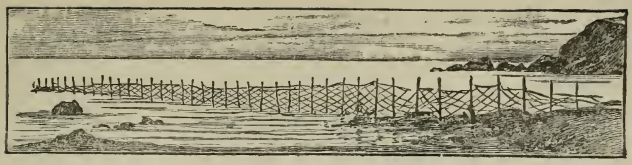
985

CHAPTER PAGE

XIV. OF THE FIRST SIEGE OF PONTEFRACT CASTLE 222

XV. OF THE SECOND SIEGE OF PONTEFRACT CASTLE 239

XVI. OF THE EVIL NEWS FROM DALE'S FIELD 255



WHEN CHARLES THE FIRST WAS KING.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED.

I CANNOT deny that when I heard the last ring of the horses' feet and realized that Philip and Jack were gone, perhaps to great adventures, I was somewhat downcast at the thought of being left behind, and once the notion did come into my mind to ride after and join them. But then I thought again of my mother, and sister, and Rose Lisle, and felt that it was my duty to protect them. And so I opened the orchard-

gate, and went down the familiar paths and put my horse in his stable, and afterwards went to bed and slept soundly, being somewhat worn out with my doings that day.

Now I expected, when I awoke next morning, to hear that Master Nicholas Pratt had sent some of his men after me, for he had proved himself so very much in earnest about our capture that I did not think he would be content to let his birds fly without some attempt to regain them. But there were no magistrates' men there when I left my chamber, and none came during the morning. Also it would seem that Ben Tuckett had been misinformed as to their having sent men to search for papers at Dale's Field, for my mother had had no visitor of that kind on the previous day. So, having remained at home during the morning, so as to be in readiness if Master Pratt and his crew desired to ask questions of me, I con-

sidered that my duty was done; and in the afternoon I walked across the meadows to service at Darrington church, being accompanied by Lucy and Mistress Rose. And we had no sooner got into church than I beheld Ben Tucket, seated in the corner of the nave and watching the door. When he saw me he pulled a wry face and seemed much surprised, but he was fain to keep his astonishment to himself until evensong was over, which he did with evident discomfort, his eyes constantly wandering over his book to make sure that it was really me whom he saw.

"How now, Will?" said he, joining me in the porch as soon as the last "Amen" was pronounced. "I thought thou hadst been a hundred miles away by this time. Where, then, are Jack and Master Lisle?"

"A good way on the road, Ben, I hope. As for me, I thought it best to stay here and protect the women."

"I dare say you are right, Will," he answered. "Nevertheless, I would have done my best in that direction. Yea, indeed, I was on my way now to see how they fared, having called in here to see if Lucy perchance came to service."

"You were wrong last night, Ben," I said. "There was no search for any papers at Dale's Field. Neither has any person of Master Pratt's sending been here this morning."

"So I heard in town before setting forth," answered Ben, "and I heard also that Master Pratt was somewhat exceeding his duty yesterday, and is now being heartily laughed at for what has befallen him. Certainly 'tis true that most of the magistrates and aldermen are for the Parliament, but the mayor is not, and he hath the military to support him. And so I fancy, Will, that you will hear no more of last night's affair. And now I perceive that the girls have ceased greeting

their acquaintance, Will, so let us cross the fields with them."

And therewith he walked off with Lucy, having by that time arrived at a perfect understanding with her, while I followed after with Mistress Rose, with whom, you may be quite sure, I was not averse to walk and talk, being daily more attracted by her many virtues and graces. Only I was always somewhat tongue-tied when with her, for she seemed so far above me that I never knew what to say or how to say it.

Ben Tuckett was quite right in saying that we should hear no more of the previous night's adventure. Nor did we, save that there were certain people in Pontefract market-place next Saturday who jested with me respecting my tenancy of Master Nicholas Pratt's cellar, seeming to regard the matter as highly diverting. But there were others who looked upon me very blackly, and whispered each to other as I went along,

these persons being persistent Parliamentarians who wished not well to the King and his servants. Also I met full face in the streets Master Pratt himself, and could not help smiling in his face, so diverted did I feel at the sight of him. Whereupon, he grew very red in countenance, and looked angrily at me.

"Have a care, Master Dale," quoth he, "have a care! I may have thee in ward again presently, and thou shalt not escape then, I promise thee."

But I laughed more at that, and went further along the street, where I met the mayor, Master Richard Oates, with whom I stayed to exchange a word.

"Do not vex Master Pratt," said he, when I told him of my recent encounter. "It will not do, Master Dale, to recruit for the King publicly in our town. For see you, there is so much feeling about the Star Chamber and such-like things, that I think the people are

of Master Pratt's way of thinking. To be sure, 'tis a choleric man and a zealous partisan, but it will be well not to vex him. Tut, man, what need to make more enemies than we can help? Do you attend to your farm, Master Dale, and leave politics alone. Your friend Lisle hath left these parts, I hear?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "He has gone to the King, and John Drumbleforth, our parson's son, with him."

"So Jack has gone? Well, well, 'tis a harum-scarum young lad, but with as good a heart as ever beat. Alas! I mind how skilfully he robbed my orchard. But do not thou go to the wars, Will Dale. There will be fighting, sure enow, and 'tis thy place to protect thy womenkind. But do not recruit here again, Will."

I had no mind to do that, for it was plain to me that the burgesses of Pontefract, taken as a body, were much more in favour of

Parliament than King, and were inclined to break the head of any one who went against them. Not, indeed, that His Majesty had no supporters in these parts, for of the gentry and clergy he had plenty, in addition to the garrison of the Castle, under Colonel Lowther, a right valiant commander. For when the King erected his standard and called upon all true subjects to aid him in subduing his rebellious Parliament, there were many gallant gentlemen showed themselves ready to espouse his cause, and give time and money to serve him. Most, indeed, of the great families in our parts did liberally contribute to the royal exchequer at this time, giving, according to their means, from one hundred to many thousands of pounds in money. Moreover, they formed companies of their tenantry and supported them at their own expense, and they provisioned the Castle against the siege which was expected, and formed themselves and their companies into

a garrison, and in this and other ways did all they could to further the King's cause. Such were Sir William Lowther, Colonel Middleton, Colonel Wheatley, Major Dennis, and many others, besides the gentlemen volunteers, which were formed into four divisions, commanded respectively by Colonel Grey, son of Lord Grey, of Warke, in Northumberland, Sir Richard Hutton, Sir John Ramsden, and Sir George Wentworth. These gentlemen volunteers had amongst them many great and honourable names, such as the Daveys of Lincolnshire, lords of thirty-three baronies in that county; Sir Edward Radcliffe of Threshfield in Craven; Colonel Portington of Barnby Dun, who suffered great things for the royal cause; Captain Vavasour of Haslewood, a man of old and noble family, and an adherent of the ancient religion, being a Catholic, as were also several of the gentlemen volunteers, such as the Crofts, the Sayles, the Hammer-

tons, the Stapletons, the Annes of Burghwallis, the Pearrys, the Easts, the Emsons, and many others; Sir John Ramsden of Byram, Lieutenant Saville, Sir Richard Hutton, High Sheriff of Yorkshire, whom the King was used to call the honest judge, with many another gallant gentleman who was more minded to serve the monarchy than the democracy. All these helped to make the ancient Castle a stronghold for the King, and did there practise their companies in the art of war, so that there was good prospect of their being able to hold out in the event of the Parliamentary troops being led against them.

Now, for some time after that news came to us but very rarely, and was not stirring or eventful when it did come, so that our lives went on in much the old way. I went about my farm and did my work, riding into market every Saturday and there transacting my business and hearing whatever

gossip was afloat. There might have been no disturbance in the land, so smoothly did things go with us at Dale's Field. To me, indeed, it was a pleasant time, for the presence of Rose Lisle seemed to cast a new light over the old house. She had made herself one of us already, looking up to my mother as if she were her own daughter, and busying herself about the household duties just as Lucy did. And so much did she win my mother's heart that I believe she began to love Rose as a daughter, at which I was well pleased, being strangely rejoiced to see it.

Looking back upon that time, I cannot decide in my own mind when it was that I first began to love Rose Lisle. Nay, I do not think that there ever was a time when I did not love her, from the first moment in which I set eyes on her, coming singing along the path in the woods, for I thought of her from that day constantly, boy as I

was. And yet when I met her again and found her grown a woman, and more beautiful than any woman I had ever seen, I was conscious of a new feeling and a new hope springing up in my heart, so that I came to look upon her as the one desire of my life. To me she was always the same, a maiden to be loved and honoured and won if my unworthiness could win her. Yet there was nothing fiery or impatient about my love for her, for it was enough for me that I could see her and enjoy her presence. And I knew not whether in those days she saw that I loved her, as indeed I did.

But there were others who saw it, and of these none were quicker in seeing it than Jacob Trusty, whose old eyes, I think, could see through a millstone in anything that concerned me. I had often noticed him watching Rose and myself narrowly as we walked of an evening in the garden or orchard, and many a time I had come across him and

Rose talking together on such matters as the rearing of poultry and feeding of calves and other similar subjects on which Jacob's heart delighted. But for a long time he said nothing to me, though I could see that he was thinking a good deal, for he was one of those people who do not deliver their minds in a hurry, and this quality seemed to deepen in him as his years increased. However, he was at last minded to address me on the matter, which he did one day as we stood in the cow-house, where we had been considering the advisability of feeding the roan cow for market.

"Master Tuckett," said Jacob, "seems to come courting very strong. A persevering young man as ever I saw."

This was true. I suppose nobody was ever more slavishly in love than Ben was with my sister Lucy.

"The doorstep," continued Jacob, "never cools of him. However, 'tis the way of the

world. So long as there are lasses there will be lads to run after them. In going through the world, William, you will never see aught plainer than that. Who-ho! Stand over, lass."

This last remark was addressed to the roan cow, whose stall Jacob was bedding down with straw. He poked and prodded the straw about her feet before he resumed his remarks.

"'Tis as natural to fall in love," said Jacob, "as it is for schoolboys to fight. The most natural thing in the world it is. For in going through the world, William, what does a man see? He sees the birds a-mating and a-building their nests everywhere, and the doves making love after their fashion in every coppice. Wherefore, I say, it is a very natural thing that young men and women should pair off."

"But, Jacob," I said, "you never paired off with anybody, because you have never

been married. Come, now, why didn't you practise what you preach?"

"Why, certainly," he said, "that's true, but there's a many people very good at preaching who are very poor at practising, William. True it is I have never been married."

"Nor in love, Jacob?"

"Why," he said, "as to that, there was a young woman in Badsworth parish that I did think of at odd times. A young widow woman she was, and as plump as a partridge. Ah! I once walked a matter of seven miles to see her. A fine figure of a woman."

"And it never came to anything, Jacob?"

"No-o," said Jacob, slowly, "no-o. I never could quite give my mind to wedlock, though admiring it in others. It seemed beautiful at a distance, but I don't know how it might be nearer at hand."

"Oh, Jacob, and that is you who talk

so finely about birds and doves and such like."

"Ay, marry," he said, with a twinkle of his grey eyes, "and why not? I am well pleased to see Master Tuckett come a-courting of our Lucy, and between thee and me and the post, William, I should like to see thee making towards a gold ring thyself. What, man, didst ever see a properer maiden than yond? I lay not."

He pointed across the fold to the orchard, where Rose Lisle, fair as a dream of May, was gathering the ripe fruit into a basket and singing some old ditty softly to herself. I turned and watched her in silence.

"If I were thou, William," said old Jacob, "I should thank God three times a day for such a wife as yond. Never in all this world wilt thou find so fair a maiden, nor so good. Let her not slip from thee. I speak, being old and anxious for thy welfare, having oved thee from thy birth upwards. I should

like to see thy boy sitting on my knee before I go, William, even as thou didst sit there many years ago."

And having said that he immediately began to make a noise and bustle amongst the cows, shaking up the straw in their stalls and causing them to tug so at their chains that I escaped from the racket and joined Rose Lisle in the apple orchard, being half inclined to tell her there and then of my love for her; yet I refrained, for I was not minded to be too hasty, although I knew right well that I loved her as truly as if I had known her for twenty years.

During the first autumn weeks in that year we had little news of Philip Lisle and Jack Drumbleforth. They had sent us word soon after their departure of their safe arrival at Nottingham, where the King was gathering an army about him, but after that there came a long period during which we had no tidings whatever. We often made inquiry

of the people travelling along the road, but received nothing but vague and indefinite tidings of the course of events. Some said that the King had gathered a great army about him; others reported that His Majesty had but a scanty following. Towards the end of September came news of a fight at Powick Bridge, in which the Royalist troops had been successful, and this naturally gave a feeling of encouragement to those who like ourselves were loyal to the monarchy. Then came another period of silence; and then, a month later, we began to hear rumours of a great fight at Edgehill, on the borders of Warwick and Oxford, at which, said our informants, many men on both sides had been slain and wounded. We were somewhat anxious at this, being in ignorance as to the safety of our own friends, and we made many inquiries of travellers coming from the south, hearing nothing, however, till well into November, when a horseman,

covered with mire and mud, rode up to our door, and, asking for Master Dale, delivered into my hands a thick packet directed to me in Jack Drumbleforth's writing.

CHAPTER II.

OF JACK'S LETTERS FROM THE SEAT OF WAR.

NOW, as good fortune would have it, Parson Drumbleforth happened to be in our house at the very moment of the arrival of Jack's letter, and knowing that the latter would not fail to send news to his father, I asked the messenger if he had no communication for the Vicar of Darrington.

"Yea, troth have I," he answered, touching his pouch significantly, "and here it is in my satchel. God send it be not out of my track, for me and my horse are tired enow, having ridden I know not how many miles this day, and being bound for the

Castle at Pontefract with despatches for Colonel Lowther."

"It is not out of your track, friend," I said; "but here is the vicar himself, and you can do your errand without further hindrance. And if your despatches are not too pressing, and you will please to dismount, we will entertain both your horse and yourself with food and rest, which will do neither any harm judging from your appearance."

"You speak truly, master," said the man, getting slowly down from his saddle as if he were stiff with long riding. "You speak truly indeed. Beshrew me if I have drawn rein since I passed Conisbrough Castle, as you may believe by looking at my beast. As for the despatches, I care not about immediate deliverance of them, so long as they fall not into the enemy's hands."

"We are for the King here," I said, and led him into the kitchen, whither he followed me with great readiness, "and your de-

spatches will be safe enough, for there has been no fighting in this quarter as yet, whatever there may be to come."

"You are well off," said he, sinking down like a tired man upon the long settle. "By the great Turk! but we had a fair brush of it at Edgehill yonder. A plague take this war, say I! If it were with one's natural enemies, Spaniard or Turk, well and good, but as it is——"

"Then Master Drumbleforth has been at Edgehill?" I said. "Is he well, and is Master Lisle with him?"

"They are both thereabouts," he answered, "or maybe at this present they are on the road towards London, for His Majesty is minded to spend Christmas at Whitehall, and is pushing on thither."

"Then the King hath won the fight at Edgehill?"

"Why that, master, is more than I can say. Myself, I should say 'twas a drawn

game. However, Essex and his men have retreated southwards, and the royal forces are after them."

By that time the maids had brought food and drink, and placed them before the messenger; so bidding him refresh himself and spare not, I carried the letters into my mother's parlour, where she and Parson Drumbleforth and the two girls were seated conversing in the firelight. For it was now growing dark and cold o' nights, and we were always glad to get the curtain drawn and the candles lighted, so that we might hear the wind and rain outside, and feel comfortable that we were safely housed.

"News from the wars!" I cried, holding up the two letters. "A messenger carrying despatches for Colonel Lowther hath brought them with him. Here is one for you, sir, from Jack, and another for me. Mistress Rose, there is naught from your father, but he is well, so the messenger says, and may-

be he has enclosed somewhat in Jack's letter."

So I whipped out my knife, and cut away the cover, but there was no letter for Rose lying therein.

"He hath been too busy to write," she said, smiling, "but he will have sent some message by Master Drumbleforth's letter. So long as he is well I care not."

Now, the vicar had eagerly opened his own epistle, and was peering at it through his glasses, while my mother and Lucy stood eagerly by to hear the news.

"Are they well, sir?" inquired my mother. "Pray God they both be in good health, so far away from home and friends as they are. 'Tis poor work to be sick in a strange country."

"Why," said Parson Drumbleforth, "they seem to be well enough, mistress, judging from the manner in which my son writes to me. Nevertheless, his epistle is a somewhat

short one, and dealeth in little news. But if ye will give ear I will read it to you, so that we may all share in it."

So when he had cleared his voice, he read as follows :—

"'At the King's camp near Edge Hill,
"October 26, 1642.

"'To the Rev. Mr. Drumbleforth, M.A., Vicar of Darrington in the County of Yorkshire. These:

"'HONOURED FATHER,—There being a messenger about to carry despatches from our camp here unto Colonel Lowther at Pontefract Castle, I am minded to write these to your Reverence, in the hope that they may find you in as good health as I now enjoy, for which I thank God heartily. I would have you know that there hath been a great fight here at Edgehill, in which both Master Lisle and myself figured without hurt to ourselves, save that Master Lisle hath gotten a cut across the fingers of his right hand

which doth prevent him at present from holding a pen. For this reason I am about writing a long letter to Will Dale, so that he may give news to Mistress Rose, and as I am no hand at much writing of epistles, I will beg you, honoured sir, to step along the highway to Dale's Field and learn the news there. Only I will here tell you that I am now in very good health, and have as yet come in no great need of anything, though indeed my shirts are becoming ragged, and my half-hose are well-nigh worn through. Yea, indeed, you might say to Mistress Deborah that if she hath any linen or other body-clothes of mine stored away, she would do well to pack it up, and send it to me by the bearer of this, who will return hither shortly. For I wish not to be reduced to the condition of some who, having but one shirt, are forced to go without while what they have is washed——'"

"Poor things, poor things," said my mother.

"Alas! the war is a terrible matter. What would their mothers say if they could see them in such a plight?"

"I will resume," said the vicar.

"'As to food, honoured sir, we have so far done fairly well, and I have grown no thinner. Likewise the life so far hath suited my mind very well, though I know not how it may be when the winter sets in. However, we have beaten back the enemy, and are now following him towards London, where the King means to spend Christmas. And so, sir, assuring you that I am well in body and mind, and do strive to fulfil all my duties as a Christian man, I will refer you to Will Dale for further news. Only I will beg you to believe that I am your very dutiful and loving son,

"'JOHN DRUMBLEFORTH.'

"'Tis a very right and proper letter," said the vicar, folding up the sheet with much

pride, "and doth the lad great credit. I am rejoiced to think that in the midst of battles and conflicts he doeth his duty as a Christian man should. Yea, indeed, this letter hath much refreshed me. But now, William, let us have thy news, which I doubt not will contain a deal of war and bloodshed, and such like. Open thy paper, man, and read."

"Why, sir," said I, "there are the people without who have heard that news has come, and they are anxious to hear it. What do you say, mother, if we allow them to come inside here and listen to Jack's letter being read?"

"'Tis a good thought," said Parson Drumbleforth. "Yea, mistress, let us have them all inside."

So my mother called them all to come, and presently they appeared—Jacob Trusty, and the maids, and Timothy Grass, and the ploughboys—and stood in a group at the door, ready to listen. Only the messenger

stayed by himself in the kitchen, eating and drinking at his ease, with the firelight shining on his rough and weather-beaten countenance.

"Friends," said I, when they had all assembled, "here is a letter which hath come from the wars, from Mr. John Drumbleforth. We thought you would like to hear what news he sends, so you shall hear it read."

"Ay," said Parson Drumbleforth. "Read on, Will."

But I did not think of reading it myself, Jack's writing being somewhat clerkly, and not like print. So I handed it over to Rose.

"Mistress Rose," I said, "you are a greater scholar than I, and have a clear voice. Will you read us Jack's letter?"

So she consented, standing up by the light, and looking mighty pretty as she stood there. And this is what she read to us:

"At the Camp beyond Edgehill,
"October 26, 1642.

"To Mr. William Dale at his farm of Dale's Field along the Great North Road, near Pontefract, in Yorkshire. These:

"DEAR WILL,—There has been a great battle fought at Edgehill here, and Master Lisle has had a cut across the fingers of his right hand, so that he is unable to write to Mistress Rose himself. However, you will tell her that he is quite well and in good health otherwise, and sendeth his dearest love and blessing to her, hoping that she too is well and that he may see her again ere long. Likewise that he will write unto her with his own hand so soon as he can use it once more, which will not be long, the wound being but insignificant——"

"Thank the Lord for that!" said Jacob Trusty. "For the fingers are but tender things when all is said and done."

"We came on here, Will, from joining the

King's forces near Nottingham, and we have had one other brush with the enemy before this fight at Edgehill, namely, at Powick Bridge, where we did vanquish the Parliamentarians with very great ease. This affair at Edgehill, however, was a matter of different complexion, and showed me what war is really like when it comes to it. For here was Essex with a considerable force of men, and some of them exceedingly well trained and officered, so that we knew there was some stiff and bloody work before us ere ever we drew sword. And now that it is over I cannot say that we have gained any decided advantage, for though the Parliamentarians are retreating before us, it is very slowly, and seems to savour more of caution than fear. However, the advantage, if any there be, is with us, for which we are thankful.

"I wish, Will, that you could have been side by side with me in this fight, for it was

indeed hot work, and gave me many new feelings. I cannot describe to you how the bullets whistled past our ears, or how the cannon thundered, nor how the charges of cavalry shook the ground. Neither have I clerkship enough to tell you how it looked when dead and dying men strewed the ground in all directions. As for myself, there was at first a strange sensation came over me, but then I got hot and earnest, and thought of nothing but winning the day. I wish, too, that you had seen the charge of Prince Rupert and his cavalry, which swept the Parliamentarians away like chaff before the wind, for it was the finest sight ever I saw. Nevertheless, Will, many old campaigners do seem to think that this same Prince Rupert hath somewhat too much of haste about him for a great commander. Certain it is that he is headstrong and impetuous, and doeth everything as if he were a whirlwind rushing over the earth.

"We have heard considerable news of what is going on during these last few weeks, for there are couriers and messengers going and coming continually with tidings from all parts. We understand that there is hardly a town or village where they are not making preparations for war on one side or the other. As to how the land will be divided, they say that the nobility, gentry, and common people will be for the King, while the trading classes and the yeomen of the south and west are for the Parliament. But the common people of London are not for the King, for we have heard that no less than four thousand of them enlisted on the Parliamentary side in one day. Hampden has been down in Buckinghamshire and has there raised a band of two thousand men, whom he hath dressed in green coats, so that they make a brave show. We hear, too, that one Cromwell, a member of Parliament, is raising a band of men in the fen

country, and is disciplining them in rare fashion, having boasted that with a thousand men of his own stamp he will put the King's forces to confusion. And certain it is, Will, that some of these Parliamentarians are terribly in earnest over this matter, and are willing to back up their arguments by hard knocks.

"The King hath gotten himself a good army together, and at present his friends seem assured of victory, yet His Majesty hath not a happy look on his countenance, which is always sad and thoughtful. I hear that the Queen hath gone abroad to raise money for the war, and hath taken with her the Crown jewels and ornaments wherewith to further that object. How our army will fare about supplies I know not at present, but up to this time we have had no cause of complaint, and so long as we continue to be successful I think the men will live in good spirits. Moreover, we hope shortly to be in London,

but there will be some sharp brushes ere we get there, for the trained bands will certainly oppose our progress, and they are commanded by General Skippon, who, I understand, hath had long experience in the German wars. Doubt not, however, that we shall give a good account of ourselves, for we are not lightly to be put down by these Roundhead knaves. Yet, indeed, Will, this war is a terrible matter, for there are families divided against each other, and it is easily done for father to kill son or son to kill father——"

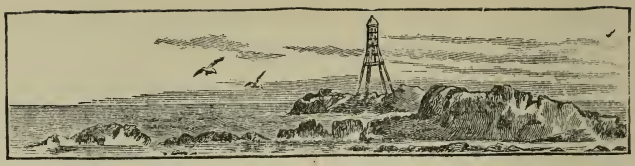
"Alas!" said my mother; "he is right—a terrible matter it is indeed; would it were well over!"

"And now I have no more news for thee at present, old Will, save that Master Lisle is commander of a company of volunteers, and I am one of his men and likely to be promoted, being, so they say, of good stuff for a soldier. So when I come homewards

again I may perhaps come as captain or colonel. Glad indeed I shall be to see ye all again, for in all my wanderings thus far I have seen naught that I liked so well as our own village, with its grey church tower and comfortable alehouse, nor have I met any face that I welcomed as I would welcome one of our own home faces. So thou wilt remember me to everybody—to thy mother and sister and to Mistress Rose and to Jacob; and thou wilt tell Jacob that I have remembered his many admonitions and found them useful; and thou mayest tell Timothy that the horses in these parts are not like ours, and beg thy mother to make the autumn ale extra strong this year, for indeed I am looking forward to it. And now I will say farewell to all of you until another time, when thou shalt hear more, God willing, from thy old friend,

"JOHN DRUMBLEFORTH."

So the letter was read, and we were all glad to hear that our two adventurers were so far well and prosperous. And the servants having gone out, much pleased with what they had heard, I followed them to speed forward the messenger with his despatches for Colonel Lowther, bidding him call upon us the next day as he returned southwards, so that we might give him letters for our friends. And after he had gone we sat down with pens and papers and wrote news to them, assuring them of our joy that so far they had been spared amidst all their dangers.



CHAPTER III.

OF THE REMARKABLE CONDUCT OF DENNIS WATSON.

DURING the next few months we heard little news of Philip Lisle and Jack Drumbleforth, for the war made but small progress, the rival armies being for the most part in safe quarters for the winter. Now and then, indeed, we had letters from both our adventurers, but they had little to tell us, nor could they give us any information as to what time we might expect to see them again. So matters went on during that winter, and there were many who prophesied that before spring the sad dif-

ference 'twixt King and Parliament would be adjusted, and the nation restored to peace and tranquillity. But there were others, men of keener sight and perception, who knew that the unhappy quarrel now in existence would only be terminated by the complete overthrow of one side or the other. Amongst these men, who proved the true prophets in the end, there were none more sagacious than Oliver Cromwell, the man of whom Jack Drumbleforth had spoken in his letter, and who afterwards came to enjoy great power, so that he ruled England for many years with sterner hand than any king had ever exercised. This Cromwell was a yeoman of Huntingdon, a man of the most surprising powers, so that those who favoured his views looked upon him as nearly divine, and obeyed him as surely no king was ever obeyed. As for his generalship, none will dispute that he was the central figure of this sad war, for he and his Ironsides turned the

fortunes of the fight many a time when things were going against the Parliamentarians. Now, during that winter this Cromwell was training his men with a skill and conviction which speedily made his troop unrivalled for bravery and prowess in the field. Such a general, I suppose, never lived, for he refused to have men under him who fought not from conviction, so that his regiment became a body of troopers who struck each blow under the firm belief that their strength was increased by the powers of Heaven. Men who fought for fighting's sake, old soldiers who fought because to fight was their profession, he would have none of; his Ironsides were men like himself, animated with the sense of a mission from on high. How these men did succeed in the Civil War all England knows at this present time. And though I could never side with them, being by conviction a Royalist, and believing that popular government is much more tyran-

nical than ever monarchical has been or can be, I did yet see enough of them to know that they were true Englishmen, and impelled to what they did by a sense of real patriotism.

Now, during that winter I had other matters to think of than the war, for I was much exercised in my mind over the peculiar conduct of Dennis Watson. I have said little of Dennis and his father lately, for indeed they have not come within my history, I having seen little of them since my father's death. True, I constantly saw them at the markets, never holding speech with them nor being in their company, for I regarded them both with exceeding bitter feelings, being convinced that Rupert Watson was the murderer of my dear father, and not liking what I knew of Dennis. Many an hour did I pass in thinking over the events of that fatal night when my father was shot down at my side, and at such times my

fingers itched to grasp his assassin's throat and crush the breath out of him. But with all my thinking I could never get any nearer the heart of the matter, and so was fain to let it rest as it did. And yet I had no doubt that it was Rupert Watson who committed that foul deed, and I have often stood in Pontefract Market-place watching his dark face and longing that I could fasten the full guilt upon him and bring him to task for his crime.

By this time Dennis Watson was grown up to manhood and took his full share in the affairs of his father's business. He was a tall, fine-looking man, not by three inches as tall as myself, but exceedingly well proportioned and handsome in countenance, so that the maidens in that neighbourhood were used to say he was the best-looking fellow in the county. Yet for all his good looks there was something about his face, whether in eyes or mouth I cannot say, which made me

feel that I could never have trusted or liked him, even if he had not been a Watson and therefore my rightful enemy. Some people may say that I had a prejudice against him and that my dislike to him arose therefrom; but, as events proved, I was right in what I thought. For he was not only false and treacherous, but cruel and revengeful, as you will see in the course of this history. Yea, I think that if his father were possessed of bad qualities, they were increased and multiplied in Dennis.

It was drawing near to the end of winter, when I had occasion one Saturday to go to Doncaster market, instead of proceeding, as was my wont, to the market at Pontefract, and in consequence of this it was somewhat late in the evening when I reached home again, being further delayed by a heavy storm of snow, which came upon me as I rode between Barnsdale and Wentbridge. Now, when I came into the kitchen I found

the two girls, Lucy and Rose, busied in drying many garments of female attire at a great fire, as if they had been out in the storm, like myself, and had got wet through, which I was not, being protected by my great cloak that has kept me dry and warm in all sorts of weather for half a century. So when I came to question them, it appeared that they had desired to go into Pontefract market that afternoon and had walked thither by way of Darrington. And there, as girls will, they had tarried so long looking at the goods exposed for sale in the mercer's shops, that the darkness came upon them ere they were out of the town, and to make matters worse, the snowstorm overtook them as they came over Swanhill.

"But there," said Rose, who had told me all this news, "a good Samaritan was riding by in his light cart, and seeing our plight, he offered us a lift and brought us home to the very orchard gate, which was a kind

thing to do, for we had been wet through else."

"And who was your cavalier?" I asked.

"Nay," she answered, "I know him not, but so far as one could see he was a handsome young man, and very well spoken too, and did for us all that he could."

"Did you know him, Lucy?" I inquired, turning to my sister, who was busied with some article of finery at the fire.

"Yes," said Lucy, with something of reluctance I thought. "Yes, I knew him, Will, but I fear you will be angry if I tell you his name. For it was Dennis Watson, brother, who gave us a ride home."

"Dennis Watson!"

"You need not look so much astonished," said Lucy, who was half ready to weep. "If you had seen what a plight we were in you would have excused us."

"Why," said Rose, "for what are we to be excused, pray? Is there any harm,

Master Will, in two young women accepting such timely help?"

"You do not understand," I said. "This Watson is our deadly enemy, and Lucy knows that she should never have so much as speech with him. For shame, Lucy! You should have walked through a wilderness of snow rather than accepted help from him."

Now, I spoke so sharply that poor Lucy, who was very tender-hearted, and had been completely spoiled for aught but soft speeches by that simpleton, Ben Tuckett, began to shed tears and otherwise exhibit much emotion. Of which conduct I took no heed, continuing to upbraid her sharply, until I saw Mistress Rose's cheeks grow red and her eyes bright, and presently she turned upon me very fiercely and looked at me so indignantly that I became silent.

"Go your ways, Master Dale," she said. "You are too bad and too cruel, and you

ought to be ashamed of yourself for speaking to poor Lucy in this unmanly fashion. A pretty thing indeed that we may not accept a little gallantry without being spoken to in this fashion!"

"Indeed, Mistress Rose," I said, "I am not addressing myself to you, but to Lucy there, who knows——"

"Lucy knows that if we had not accepted Master Watson's kindness we should have caught our deaths of cold," she answered; "but that perhaps would have suited you better, so that your naughty pride should not be injured. For shame, Master Dale! And now go away and let me comfort Lucy. You should have Master Drumbleforth to lecture you for your unkindness to your sister."

And therewith she made up to Lucy and put her arms round her, turning her own pretty face towards me with such a look of injury that I was completely subdued, and

stumbled out of the kitchen, wondering how it is that a woman can beat a man nine times out of ten. For there was not a man in all Yorkshire could have scolded me with impunity, and yet I dared not say a word to Mistress Rose Lisle. So away I went to my chamber to change my own damp garments, and returning after a little time found Rose alone in the great kitchen, Lucy having gone to assist my mother in some household duty. Now, they had left to Rose the task of giving me my supper, so there she was ready to wait upon me, which she did very dutifully. Perhaps I looked somewhat ashamed of myself for my recent conduct (though indeed, upon reflection, I know not what there was to be ashamed of), and Rose, seeing it, thought to give me some comfort, for presently, while I was eating and drinking, and she sitting near busied with some woman's work of sewing or shaping, she gave me a timid glance and said that she

feared she had spoken too sharply but a little while ago, and begged my pardon for doing so.

"Though indeed, Will," she continued, "you were too hard upon poor Lucy, who meant no ill. Do you really think she did wrong to accept Master Watson's help?"

"Yes," I said shortly, meaning not to be forced from my position on any account. "Yes, because she knew that the man is our enemy."

"To have heard him speak," she said, "I should not have thought him to be any one's enemy."

"I know not how he speaks," I answered. "Rough-spoken or soft-spoken, our enemy he is."

"But why should you be enemies?" she asked. "Surely it is best to be at peace with all, is it not?"

"I cannot answer that, Mistress Rose. I suppose Parson Drumbleforth would say that

it is, and therefore I ought to say so too; but, you see, the Dales and Watsons have always been at enmity, and always will be."

"Nay," she said, "why should they? Must strife go on for ever? Why do you not heal your differences and be at peace?"

"Mistress Rose," I said, "did you never hear tell of my father's foul murder? Slain he was, as cruelly as ever man was slain—shot down on the high-road as if he had been a dog."

"Yes," she said, "I have heard of it."

"And did you not know that we believe that Rupert Watson, the father of this Dennis, to have been the murderer? Yea, that we do! And now you know why these Watsons are our enemies, and why we must have neither part nor lot with them."

She was silent for a little time after that, and sat diligently plying her needle.

"But, Master Dale," she said after a time,

"do you really think that this Master Rupert Watson killed your father? Can any man be so cruel as to commit such a deed? Might it not have been the work of some robber who was alarmed at the coming of others, and rode away after firing upon your poor father? It seems so hard to think that any man could foully slay another like that."

"It may seem so to one like yourself," I said; "but so far as I have seen, a man will do anything for revenge. And Rupert Watson had need of revenge."

"But if he did it," she said, "his son had naught to do with the wickedness. And it is so much better to be at peace with one's neighbours that it would seem more kind not to visit the father's faults on the son. It is not right, is it, to blame one for what another has done, nor to think the son is bad because the father was?"

"I know not whether it be right or wrong, Mistress Rose," I answered; "but

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this I do know, that Dennis Watson comes of a bad stock and is our enemy, and will always be."

So after that she said no more, only she seemed to think that I was one of an unforgiving temper. But I could not find it in my heart to think well of any Watson.

Now, the next morning was fine and frosty, and in accordance with our usual custom we walked along the high-road to the morning service at Darrington church. And we had not long been seated in the church when I caught sight of Dennis Watson, who occupied a seat near our own, and who was looking boldly upon Rose. Thereat a thought then struck me which sent me first hot and then cold, and made my blood tingle in my veins. What if this ancient enemy of mine had seen Rose Lisle only to covet her and wish to win her for himself? Indeed there was no reason why he should not fall in love with Rose Lisle

if his heart inclined that way. But I felt that if such a thing should ever come to pass as that he should win her, then—— But there I thought no more of it, only I made a great vow that Rose should be mine and mine only, whatever might come.

Dennis Watson, however, had evidently some project on his mind, for no sooner was the last "Amen" said than he hurried out of church and stood waiting us when we came through the porch, where he stood bowing and scraping to the two girls, who were going out first. He was dressed very fine and his grand clothes looked gay and modish in comparison with my own sober garments. When I came up with them, he was already addressing the girls, Rose accepting his remarks with a polite air, but Lucy shrinking back as if frightened, as indeed she was, knowing that I was behind her.

"I was but too glad to be able to do a little service to two ladies," Dennis was

saying as I strode up behind. "Mistress Lucy, I trust, was——"

But there I spoke myself.

"Mistress Lucy Dale, sir, is grateful for the service you did her, as I expect she told you at the time, so that I know no need for more to be said."

And with that I drew Lucy's arm within my own and turned away. But I saw the same dark flush rise to Dennis Watson's face and the same look come into his eyes which I remembered of old when we were schoolboys together.

"As you please, Master Dale," said he. "You seem inclined for enmity rather than friendship."

"Between you and me," I answered, "there can be no friendship, Master Dennis Watson. There is blood between us."

Now, I would not have said that upon reflection, but it had slipped my lips ere I

was aware. His face went pale and he glared at me angrily.

"So you accuse us of murder, do you?" he whispered, walking close to my side. "There shall be more blood between us if you like. Meet me in Went Woods tomorrow at sunrise and let us settle our difference, Master Dale. The sooner the better to my mind."

"As you will," I said, and walked onward. He had spoken in a low voice and the girls had not heard him. But I had heard, and comprehended, and now there I was face to face with the ancient quarrel, which it seemed that nothing could stamp out.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE MEETING IN THE WOODS.

I SUPPOSE that I was very quiet and reflective during that walk home from church, for more than once Mistress Rose Lisle rallied me on my silence. And indeed I had cause for reflection, for I knew that what had passed between me and Dennis Watson meant serious business. I was not the man to draw back when he spoke of meeting to settle our difference, for I had no fear either of him or of death. But I do not think any man, however brave he may be, can choose but think seriously when he is about to fight a duel. There

he is with a very great chance of being shot, and more chance, I suppose, than in a pitched battle. Now, if I were to be shot and killed it would be a very unpleasant thing in more senses than one. For the women would be left defenceless and the farm would be without master, and everything would be at sixes and sevens, to say nothing of the grief that would result. However, what must be, must be, and it was perhaps as well that the old quarrel had broken out again sooner than later. I knew right well that Dennis Watson and myself could never be other than enemies, and when there is a feeling like that betwixt two men, bloodshed is certain to result. So when I had come to that conclusion, I strove to put the matter from me and to talk and think of other things. But in spite of my endeavours I could not quite keep the matter out of my mind, and presently I found myself wishing that Jack Drumble-

forth were at home so that I could ask his advice. For Jack was skilled in the conduct of all these sort of matters and would have been sure to give me wise counsel.

I was not, however, to go quite without an adviser, for when we reached home we found Ben Tuckett seated in the parlour, he having walked over the hill from Pontefract to pay his usual Sunday visit to Lucy. I was very glad to see honest Ben, and determined to confide in him. Yet I would much rather have seen Jack's face, for Ben, though a true friend and a trusty, was very fond of preserving his own skin and other people's too, and hated the sight of pistol or sword. Nevertheless I determined to press him into service on this occasion.

After dinner I got Ben out of the house on pretence of wishing to show him a new cow which I had purchased the previous day at Doncaster. Ben was somewhat slow in responding to my invitation, for it was a

bitter cold day outside, and the fire in my mother's parlour looked very inviting. Moreover, there were some fine apples and walnuts on the table, and Lucy had picked out a remarkably large pear for Ben to try his teeth on, so that he gazed longingly around him as I led him forth, and shivered when we turned into the fold.

"Come, Ben," I said, "you can surely stand ten minutes of cold weather. You did not notice the cold, I warrant, as you came along this morning!"

"No," said he; "for then, Will, I was coming into Paradise, but now I am going away from it. Did you never notice that the schoolboy goes slowly to school and quickly from it? Likewise that a horse comes home from market faster than it goes? Show me this wonderful cow, Will, and let us go back to the fire and the girls."

"Never mind the cow," I said, "it is not worth seeing. Come in here, Ben, into the

granary. It is warm enough here for anything. You see, I have something to tell you and could not tell it before the women."

"Oh," said he, "now I see what you would have. Well, out with it, Will, for your granary is, after all, but a draughty place."

"Ben," I said, "what would you say if I told you I was going to fight a duel?"

"Why, I should say more fool you," answered Ben.

"That is just what I thought. Well, I am going to fight a duel."

"Then I cannot say anything less, Will. A duel! Well, I had a better opinion of you than that."

"Do you think I want to fight, man? Not I, indeed; but there are times when a man is forced to fight."

"I do not believe it," said he. "For look you, Will, if a man wanted to fight me, I should tell him that I valued my life too

dearly to expose it in that mad fashion. For life and liberty I would fight hard enow, but I would not put myself within twelve yards of another man's pistol for him to shoot at in cold blood. That I call rank folly."

"Well, so it may be, Ben, but you would not have me a coward?"

"I know thee, Will, for as brave a lad as ever stepped, but thou wouldst not wax braver in my estimation by fighting a hundred duels."

"This one, however, I must fight, Ben. There is no question about it."

"And with what other fool art thou going to fight, Will?"

"With Dennis Watson."

Ben nodded his head significantly.

"Oh," said he, "so that old sore is reopened, is it? The sleeping dogs will not lie, eh, Will."

"They might have slept for ever if it had

rested with me, lad. And yet perhaps not. So far as I can see it is impossible for us Dales and Watsons to be at aught but enmity. Do you remember, Ben, that occasion when Dennis and I fought behind the high wall in the school-yard?"

"Yea, very well."

"After I had fairly beaten him he came up to me and told me that he hated me, and always should hate me, and would cause me such trouble as would make me wish that I had never been born. So that you see, Ben, hatred like that is not like to die out."

"Lads," replied Ben, "will say aught. You should have fallen upon him and given him another thrashing for his naughty speech. But this present disagreement—how came it about?"

"In this wise. It would seem that Dennis Watson gave Lucy and Mistress Rose a lift from the market on Saturday evening, and I was very grieved on account of that, and did

chide Lucy very sharply therefor, as indeed I had a right to, for she is not thy wife yet, Master Benjamin."

"Go on, lad, go on. You were always masterful over your womenkind."

"Well, then, up springs Mistress Rose and flouts me most unmercifully, so that I had never a word to say. Yea, and looked at me, Ben, like a queen, so that I was quite ashamed of myself, saying that I was unkind to Lucy, and I know not what."

"I am glad she hath such a spirit," said Ben.

"Then this morning we went our ways to church, and there was this Watson in fine clothes like a jay, and when we came out he must be bowing and smiling to the two maidens, until I cut it short by telling him that I supposed my sister had already thanked him for his service, and therefore there was no need to say more. And at that he asks if I am for enmity or friendship,

or something to that effect, to which I replied that there could never be aught but enmity between us. So then he said that we had best settle our difference, and if I would meet him in Went Wood, to-morrow at sunrise we would settle it. And now, Ben, you know all about it."

"And a poor tale it is," said Ben. "Why should you reply that there must always be enmity between you?"

"Because his father murdered mine."

"You think so, Will, but you do not know it. But even if Rupert did slay your father, what had Dennis to do with that?"

"He is a Watson."

"Pooh! Am I to be blamed for all the vagaries that Englishmen are now carrying on because I am of the nation too? You are wrong, Will. 'Tis better to be at peace than at enmity. Again, why did you chide Lucy? Did Dennis do anything but a neighbourly act in giving the maidens a

lift? Why, 'twas snowing heavy that night!"

"Lucy had no business to accept a favour from him," I said.

"Why, man, that is, to my mind, pure folly," said Ben. "However, we will not argue the point. Only, I should not like to be hated by thee, Will, for thou art a good hater. Well, can we go back to the fire now?"

"Not till I have told you what I want, Ben. You must sleep here to-night and go with me in the morning. You can do that at least for me, whether you think me right or wrong."

"Very well," he said; and we went towards the house again, but had not crossed the fold when I caught sight of a lad standing at the gate with a paper in his hand. He came over when he saw us and gave me the paper, saying that Master Dennis Watson had sent it.

"Let us see what he has to say," I said, turning away with Ben and breaking the seal. "Listen, Ben.

"'If William Dale is in the same mind that he was in this morning, let him bring a friend with him to meet Dennis Watson and his friend at the old sheep-fold in Went Vale to-morrow morning at eight of the clock.'

"You see, Ben," I said, "he is not minded to let things rest. So now we must fight. Tell your master," I continued, turning to the boy, "that I will do what he wishes."

"God's mercy!" said Ben, sighing deeply. "What a state of things is this, where men grown do act like children! Well, I will stand by thee to the end, Will, and if you fall I will protect the women. Alas! you had much better have gone to the wars, for there you would have had some chance. And now let us inside to the fire."

During the rest of that day I was very

restless and unsettled in my demeanour, and I suppose that Rose Lisle must have noticed it, for she kept looking at me in a strange way. I could neither talk nor eat, but wandered about from parlour to kitchen and in and out of the house, so that my mother and Lucy both spoke of my restlessness. And this was from no fear on my part, but because I wanted the time to pass and the affair to be over.

Late that night in my own chamber I cleaned my pistol and made ready my powder and shot, placing them in readiness next morning. Somehow, the sight and handling of them restored my calmness, and presently I went to bed and slept as soundly as was usual with me. And when I woke the grey light was struggling through the window, whereupon I rose and woke Ben, and finding that it was nearly time for our meeting we wrapped ourselves in our cloaks and set forth across the snow to the woods.

Now that the time was at hand I felt as cool and unconcerned as ever I did in all my life; but poor Ben, who neither liked the business we were on nor leaving his warm bed for the frosty morning, was woebegone and miserable, and did shiver and tremble so that I had to give him my arm.

"Why, Ben," said I, "this is the wrong way about. It is you who ought to support me, not I you. You might be going to be shot at yourself, man."

"It is all very well to talk, Will, but I had rather be shot at myself than see another man shot at. Fancy the suspense while you take aim at one another! Whew! it makes me run cold to think of it!"

"Then do not think of it. And prithee pluck up some courage, for see, here they are, and I would not that either of us should show any signs of fright."

"Who is it that Dennis hath brought with him?" said Ben, as we stepped

into the enclosure. "Is it any one we know?"

"It is Tom Gascoyne," I said. "Ah! that is another man I like not. Birds of a feather are these two, Ben. But see, here is Tom coming towards us. Go you to meet him, Ben, and settle your plans quickly. Let us have no tarrying, so that the thing may be over and done with."

"Alas!" groaned Ben, and went to meet Gascoyne, while I stayed behind watching them. They met, conversed a moment, examined and loaded the pistols, and then fell to talking again. Presently I saw Ben exhibit decided signs of dissent, shaking his head vehemently at what the other said, and growing so decided in his non-agreement that he came away to speak to me.

"What think you, Will?" said he. "They want you to face each other at fifteen paces, which is reasonable enough, but they also

want you to fire in turn, the first turn to be tossed for. Why, 'tis murder, say I!"

"Nonsense, man," said I. "Let them have their own way about it. I have as good a chance of winning the toss as Watson hath."

"'Tis naught but murder!" grumbled Ben. "I wish I had set the magistrates on you."

But he went back, and presently he and Gascoyne took the best of three tosses, and then Ben, with a lugubrious face, came to say that Dennis was to have the first shot.

"And they say he shoots well with the pistol," sighed Ben. "Heaven turn the bullet from thee, Will. You are to stand here. Oh that I had never come into this murderous business!"

"Come, Ben, be a man. I do not think he will hit me. See, Gascoyne calls thee."

So there I stood, a clear mark against the snow-covered trees, and Dennis Watson

stood fifteen paces away, his pistol hanging down by his side. Somehow I had no fear that he would hit me. I only felt curious to know what would happen.

"Gentlemen," said Tom Gascoyne, "are you ready? Then, when I say 'Fire,' you, Dennis, will raise your piece and fire instantly."

"There must be no taking aim," groaned Ben. "It were murder if he took aim."

"There must be no taking aim," said Gascoyne. "The pistol must be lifted and fired at the word. Are you ready?"

"Yes," I called. "Quite ready."

I looked straight at Dennis Watson as I spoke, and saw his eyes staring directly at mine.

"One—two—three," said Gascoyne, slowly and clearly.

But ere he could say the fatal word, some one cried, "Stop," in a voice that made us all start and turn. And there we stood fixed

and motionless, looking at Rose Lisle as she burst into the clearing, her face whiter than the snow, and her large eyes full of horror at the sight before her.

CHAPTER V.

OF CERTAIN JOYFUL EVENTS.

I SUPPOSE that a child which is caught in the very midst of some naughtiness feels pretty much as I did at that moment. There I stood, with the pistol hanging in my hand, first staring at Rose and then gradually dropping my gaze before the shocked and startled look which I saw in her eyes. Indeed, I felt remarkably ashamed of myself now that we had been interrupted, and did not think of the affair in the same light as before. When Rose came upon the scene Gascoyne was just about to speak, and he now stood staring at her, his lips still

formed in readiness to give the word which might have sent me into another world on the instant. Seeing, however, that the affair was over, he drew himself up, and muttering, "A woman is always sure to spoil sport," he went over towards his principal, who still stood covering me with his pistol. Rose came across the thicket towards us. I knew she was looking first at one and then at the other, but I dare not look at her. I pretended to be examining the lock of my pistol.

"Gentlemen," said Rose, and I knew she was standing between us and again looking from one to the other with that gaze I dare not meet, "what is this you would have done? Fie upon you! Surely you do not call it manly to steal out here at this hour, as if you were thieves, so that you might fire at each other? Why, this is a coward's action."

"Oh," said Ben, "what wise words!

Just what I said myself. Go on, Mistress Rose; go on and spare not."

"If I had not come when I did," she continued, paying no more heed to Ben than if he had been a tree-stump, "one of you might now have been lying dead. What sort of news would that have been for his friends? Brave men, truly, to think so little of other people's feelings."

"Admirable!" cried Ben Tuckett. "Go on; sure-faith, I could not have said more myself."

"Put up your pistols," she said, "put up your pistols and go home for pity's sake. Let us have no fighting here. Pray God give you better minds of it."

Now, I had never wanted to fight, and wanted less than ever now, and I was ready enough to put up my pistol and go. But Dennis Watson was not minded to take Rose's advice, neither was he slow in saying so.

"That is all very well, mistress," said he,

with a sneer on his dark face, "but it is not agreeable to me. I came out here to shoot Will Dale yonder, and as fortune hath favoured me with the first shot, shoot him I will. So retire, mistress, if you do not wish to see blood spilt."

She looked at him very steadily and sternly, for I think that speech of his had shown her what manner of man he was, and he somewhat blanched as he met the glance she gave him. But she came rather closer to me, keeping herself between me and the pistol in his hand.

"Then, sir," she said, "you may shoot him through me. For I shall not stand aside whatever you say or threaten."

"Stand aside, dear Rose," I said, speaking for the first time since she entered the clearing. "Let him fire, if he will: I do not believe he can hit me."

"Nay," she said. "There shall be nothing left to chance."

And there she stood facing Dennis Watson's pistol, which he still held ready to discharge. And he, presently seeing that her purpose was firm, began to mutter threats and oaths, and then taunts and jeers.

"Ah!" he said, "I see how it is. A pretty plot is this, and mighty neat in its arrangement. We have been fooled, Tom Gascoyne. A pretty thing for a man who is going to fight a duel to arrange matters so that a lady stops the affair at the right moment. I warrant me Mistress Rose would not have stepped out so promptly if our enemy had had first shot."

Now, this so incensed me that I started forward fiercely, intending to chastise Dennis for his insolence, but Rose barred my path and prevented me.

"Leave him alone, Will," she said, and at the touch of her hand I restrained myself. "Master Watson," she continued, turning to

Dennis, "you are a poor, pitiful liar. If you were aught of a man you would know that a woman would not lend herself to such a poor trick as that. Do you think I could not find this matter out for myself?"

"Gentlemen," said Tom Gascoyne, "this affair is at an end, I think. What say you, Master Tuckett?"

"I say yes," said Ben. "And very gladly, for 'tis a cold morning and I am shivering. Let us withdraw our forces."

"Come, Dennis," said Gascoyne, "let us go;" and he took Watson's arm to lead him away.

But Dennis went reluctantly, favouring me and Rose with many an evil glance. And at the edge of the clearing he turned and looked at us once more, and cried out, "I will hit you yet, Will Dale, and in your tenderest spot too," and disappeared in the woods, which echoed to his

sneering laughter. And so the duel was over.

"Beshrew me," said Ben, "but I am as cold as any icicle. I shall run homewards, with your permission, for I doubt not you will be able to bring Mistress Rose home by yourself, Will."

And therewith he leapt the fence into the meadows and went homewards at a dog-trot, so that his short, sturdy figure was soon out of sight in the dim winter's light, and Rose and I were alone. There we stood in the clearing for a moment or two, neither of us speaking. I think she was looking at me, but I am quite sure that I did not dare to look at her. Yet it was necessary to say some word or other, so at last I plucked up courage to speak.

"Mistress Rose," I said, "I beg your pardon."

After this was out I felt bold enough to meet her gaze. She was looking at me with

reproachful eyes, and I noticed that she was very pale, and that her face bore an expression of pain which I had never seen there before. She said nothing when I spoke, but still looked at me. And yet I could see that she was not angry with me as she had been with Dennis, for her expression was more like that of a mother whose child had offended her by some act of naughtiness than of real anger at my conduct.

"I beg your pardon," I said again. "I have brought you from your bed on a morning like this all because I am headstrong and foolish. If I had not been so fiery I should not have caused you so much anxiety. If I had taken Ben's advice I should have done better. However, what is done is done. Only I hope you will forgive me for causing you so much trouble."

"It was not that," she said, "not that. Suppose you had been killed, Will—suppose

I had come here just in time to see you fall dead ?"

She shuddered, and raised her hands to her face as if to shut out the sight she spoke of. I went nearer to her and laid my hand on her shoulder.

"And if you had, Rose, would you have been so troubled ? There is many a better man than I shot in a duel. Would you have cared so much ?"

She lifted her eyes to mine for an instant and looked at me, and then, somehow or other, my arms were round her and her head was lying upon my shoulder and our lips had met in their first kiss. It was all so sudden and so soon over, and without a word spoken by either, and yet I knew that she was mine for ever. "My dear, my dear!" I said, "so you have some love in your heart for me after all my folly and thoughtlessness ?"

"So much," she whispered, "so much that it filled all my heart, Will. All my heart!"

"And it is mine?"

"Yours, if you will have it. And could you never see that before? Oh, Will, and I have loved you ever since you were a great boy and I a little maiden scarcely up to your shoulder. How slow you were to see it!"

"Why, my dear," I said, "I never did see it, only somehow I fancied and hoped it might be so. And now that I know it is so, I can hardly believe it. Kiss me again, Rose, so that I may know it is no dream, but blessed reality."

I can remember all that as if it were yesterday. It was a cold, grey winter morning, and the snow, six or eight inches deep underfoot, hung from the trees around us in all sorts of fantastic drapery. There was a strange stillness in the woods now that we were alone, broken only by a robin that came hopping along the branches above our heads, and chirping at us or at his fellows

that were trying to find something eatable under the firs and pines. Yet I felt nothing of the cold, and the wintry prospect might have been a fine summer night, so much summer had she put into my heart, this dear one of mine. For now all barriers were suddenly swept away between us, and there was her sweet face resting against my breast, rosy and full of life now, with the dear eyes looking shyly into mine, and the sweeter mouth ready to say, "I love you," in unison with the eloquent eyes. But of this I need write no more, for every true and happy lover hath experience of what I might say.

So we went homewards across the snow-bound meadows, feeling, I think, as if we were walking through some Paradise, rather than across the good old fields where every landmark was familiar to me. And all the way my heart was singing gaily to itself, and its song was of love and hope and happiness, and I forgot all about Dennis Watson

and his threats, and had no memory of the sad strife then agitating the land, for I could think of nothing but Rose. And so hand in hand we went into the great kitchen, where Ben was warming his blue fingers against the fire and audibly lamenting his folly in going out on such a morning. "And on such an errand too," growled he, when Rose had gone away to remove her snow-covered garments. "Yea, indeed, if I go on like this I shall soon let out my head for the crows to pick at. For indeed my brains must be soft enow when I go forth to see two fools shoot at each other."

"Hold thy peace, chatterer!" I said. "What, man, this is the happiest morning I ever knew. Ah, old Ben, thou talkest about happiness! Why, man, thou knowest not the meaning of that word. Indeed, I think nobody was ever happy until now."

"Oh!" said Ben, rising up and steadily regarding me with questioning eyes. "Oh!

Ah! Why, now, but really, Will, is thy brain turning? Nay, he is sane enough. Why, man, what has happened? Ah, now I see it all — thou hast been making matters square with Mistress Rose. Am I right, Will?"

"Right indeed, Ben. Congratulate me. Is she not divine, eh? Is she not lovelier than a dream, eh, Ben?"

"There is a little mole in her left cheek," said Ben.

"'Tis a beauty-spot, man. But what knowest thou about beauty?"

"Enough to tell thee that thou hast got one of the fairest women in all the kingdom, old Will. Ye will make a grand pair. Will, what dost say if you and Rose and Lucy and I get married soon? All at the same time, eh? Say upon Easter Monday? Is it not a good idea, lad?"

"Good enough, Ben, but the ladies must be consulted."

"If only Jack would bring himself a sweetheart home from the wars," said Ben, "we might all be married together. But I fear me, Jack is not a man for matrimony. Yea, he will live and die a bachelor."

Now, that day will always remain fresh and green in my mind, even though I live to be a hundred years old, for it was a day of rejoicing and gladness. First of all, there was the presenting Rose to my mother as her daughter indeed, in which new capacity she was welcomed warmly and gladly, for my mother had learnt to love her as if she were really her own. As for Lucy, she was as pleased as if Ben had brought her some piece of good news affecting their own prospects. And old Jacob Trusty, to whom I soon told my story, was so delighted that for that day he did little in the way of work, but remained giving orders to his assistant—for he now had a boy to help him with the cattle—and relating anecdotes concerning previous

brides in our family, none of whom, he said, could quite compare with Mistress Rose Lisle.

"An I were thou, William," said Jacob, "I should not delay matters very long. There is Master Benjamin and Lucy are ready enough for a ring, I warrant; why, then, should ye not all marry at the same time? 'Twill be a gay sight and a good one for sore eyes, that same wedding."

"But these are troublous times to marry in, Jacob," I answered. "And then, you see, Master Lisle is away at the wars, and we must have his consent before we settle anything."

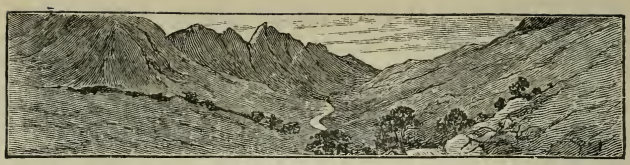
"Tut, lad, Black Phil I warrant will say naught against a Dale marrying his daughter. Marry, not he indeed! There is no better family than ours amongst all the yeomen of Yorkshire. Well, you have done well, William, to win such a bonny lass. But waste no time, lad. Let me see thy children on my knees before I die."

"I hope my children, if I have any, will be well on in years before you come to die, Jacob. Why, you are a young man yet."

"Young in mind, lad, but old in body. What! I was middle-aged when you were born. Ah, I remember that day very well indeed. We were harvesting in the twelve-acre. Then the word came along that a son was born. So I threw down my scythe and went over to the house and looked at thee, William, for the first time. As red as my Sunday scarf thou wert. But a real Dale, and weighing, I should think, about ten pound, or maybe eleven. Old Mother Eyre of Thorpe nursed thee—now dead and gone is she. Thou couldst walk at twelve months, but thou didst not talk for six months after that. Well, but 'tis a long time ago."

Now, this was not the only joyful event of that memorable day, for we had another great surprise before the evening was over.

I had gone outside to walk round the buildings, as was my custom every night, for I liked to know that my horses and cattle were safely housed and fed, and as I crossed the yard from the stables to the house I saw in the dim light two horsemen endeavouring to open the gate of the paddock. And then all of a sudden the house door was opened and Rose was in her father's arms, and we were shaking hands all round and all talking together, for Philip and Jack Drumbleforth were home again from the wars, safe and sound, and we were once more united round the old hearthstone.



CHAPTER VI.

OF JACK DRUMBLEFORTH'S RETURN HOME.

YOU may be quite sure that we threw wide open our hearts and doors and welcomed our travellers with no little rejoicing. For though they had not been away from us for such a great length of time, having only been absent during the autumn and winter, yet it appeared a considerable season, and we were heartily glad to see their faces again. And so they were quickly in the great kitchen and everybody was shaking hands with them and the women were all talking together, so that you could not hear yourself speak for noise. Nay, so

busied were they with asking questions and giving their own news as to what had happened during the travellers' absence that it was all Philip and Jack could do to get a word in or to swallow a mouthful of the food and drink which my mother and Lucy hastened to set on the table. But after a while, when the first tumult of rejoicing was over and we were all sat round the hearth in the firelight, I was able to get a good look at my two old friends and notice how their adventures had fared with them. And I quickly perceived that even those few months of campaigning had changed Jack Drumbleforth in appearance, if in nothing else. For he was now bronzed and tanned like one who has been out much in all weathers, and he had grown a great beard and moustache, so that his face was much changed. But the same old eyes of honest grey looked out from above the same somewhat snub nose, and the eye twinkled

when he said a sly thing just as in the old days. I could not think what Parson Drumbleforth would say to his son's altered appearance, for Jack looked less like a learned clerk than ever. He had gotten himself a slight sword-cut on his right cheek, and this, while giving him a military air, also added something of distinction to him, according to the girls. Yea, indeed, in his scarlet coat and sash and great buff boots, with the sword at his side and his hair and beard trimmed in the Stuart fashion, Jack looked a very different fellow to the old Jack that used to make fun for us in the old days.

I suppose that nobody was more content that night than my mother, who, having a great horror of war and bloodshed, was only too well pleased to see our warriors home again with their heads and limbs still preserved to them. But she had been better pleased if Philip Lisle could have given her more satisfactory news about the war, which

she wished to see terminate there and then, so dreadful a thing did it seem to her that Englishmen should fight with Englishmen. So she quickly began to make inquiry of Philip Lisle of the war and its prospects.

"What think you, sir?" said my mother. "Will the war soon come to an end?"

But at that he shook his head.

"Nay, madam," said he, "I cannot answer that question, for I know not what to say. However, if I am to give an opinion, I should say that it will not. The issues are too great and the feeling too bitter for it to end yet. If it does end speedily it will only be by one party waiving its claims."

"And neither will do that," said Jack. "It will be war to the knife yet awhile. A sad enough thing it is, Mistress Dale, to have to cut your brother's throat or fire an ounce of lead through his body, but that is what Englishmen are doing just now, and must continue to do, I fear."

"Alas! a sad thing enough," said my mother. "But what think you? Will the King prevail in this contest? We hear so much here that differs in opinion, some saying that the Parliament will win in the end, and some that the King will finally prevail over his enemies. What have you to say to it, sir?"

"A few months ago," said Philip, "I should have answered your question with confidence, madam, for I could never have brought myself to believe that this land of England would have risen in open rebellion against the rightful monarch. Nay, I felt sure that His Majesty had only to erect his standard in order to secure the support of the greater portion of his people, before whose arm the malcontents would quickly yield. For Englishmen to rise against the throne they have built so carefully, seemed to me a most strange thing, and I felt assured that that bad feeling, if it did exist,

could not exist long. And yet it would appear, madam, that the feeling of disaffection against His Majesty is deepening rather than lessening. I know not how it is: certain I am that he hath a kind heart and means well towards his subjects."

"Yea," said Jack, "a kind heart he hath, but a sad face. A sadder I never saw, and I have seen his some hundreds of time these last few months. He looks, Mistress Dale, as if he had no heart to smile, but is rather pondering on the fate that hath made him to be at war with his people. Now, about politics I care naught and know little, but of this I am sure. I will fight for the King while ever there is any fight left in me, for it is my honest belief that he means well. Moreover, he *is* the King, which is good enough for a plain Englishman."

"There are men nowadays, however," said Philip Lisle, "who care naught for

kings or priests, being persuaded that every man hath a right to judge for himself and please himself, and it is these men who are stirring up sedition against His Majesty. Now, I say this—every man hath a right to judge for himself between right and wrong, between what is bad and what is good in his own heart, but he hath no right to judge between himself and lawfully constituted authority. For as Holy Scripture saith—all power is of God, and according to that teaching, those who fight against the King do fight against God. I say this as a plain man who takes a plain meaning of Scripture."

"Master Cromwell interpreteth not Scripture in that way," said Jack. "Why, from what I hear he hath Scriptural warrant for everything he does. He is persuaded that the King is a common enemy to the people, and would, I doubt not, clap His Majesty into safe keeping, or even slay him as being such. They say that he fights with the

Scriptures in one hand and the sword in the other."

"Whatever the man is else," said Philip Lisle, "he is a soldier and a great general. His regiment will make its mark whenever he leads it."

"Yea, it will so!" said Jack. "It would do thee good, Will, to see these psalm-singing knaves who sing and slay with the heartiest good-will. Finely drilled and equipped they are, and have their heart in their work like Master Cromwell, their leader. I have heard that he will have no man in his company who does not make this war a personal matter. He wants naught of swashbucklers and such like, of which sort we have too many in our army—men who fight for fighting's sake."

"And what, sir, will be done," asked my mother, "if the King's Majesty doth not prevail in this war?"

"Nay, madam, I know not. Perhaps we

shall be ruled by a Parliament, or maybe some of those who are now stirring up the country against the King will assume the King's place."

"And what would they do with the King?" said Lucy.

"Marry, child, there are men in England this day who would gladly cut off the King's head and have done with him altogether. Yea, and would compass land and sea to do it. But what if they do? The King never dies, and if they slay Charles the First, Charles the Second will arise in his place. But much will come to pass ere ever these things happen. Meanwhile, let us be thankful we are with you again, safe and sound save for a scratch or two."

"I have an old father at home," said Jack, rising from his chair, "and it is time I sought him. Will, come with me to the gate and see me depart."

"Nay, I will ride with you," I said, and

went and saddled our horses. I wanted to have a word or two with Jack in private. So I bade them leave the door open for me and set out with my old friend along the highway towards Darrington. It was a dark night and a cold one, but not so dark nor so cold that Jack and I could not understand each other.

"'Tis a grand thing, Will lad," said he, as we rode along the familiar road, "'tis a grand thing to be home once more amongst the old faces and places. How goes everything with you, Will? Ben Tuckett—how prospers worthy Ben? Is he in love as deeply as ever with Mistress Lucy?"

"Ben prospers exceedingly, Jack, and is growing sleek and comely. As for love, he is deeper and deeper in it every day."

"I am glad of that," he answered. "When once a man hath fallen in love with a maid, he doth well to advance in the sweet passion rather than draw back. But now, Will, hast

thou not made some progress in this same art of love since last we met ?"

"Enough, Jack, to have come to the conclusion that Mistress Rose Lisle is the fairest creature under God's sun. Yea, Jack, and I have told her so some scores of times already. So there is another pair of us besides Ben and Lucy. It only needs for thee to find a mate, and then thy father could marry all three pairs at one time."

"Nay, lad, you had best not wait for me, or you will put off your happiness a long time. Well, thy news is good news, old lad, and I am glad to hear it."

But I had more news for him than that, and proceeded to tell him of my adventure with Dennis Watson, and of the latter's threat to do me further injury, together with all particulars of the duel and its consequences.

"It would seem that the old sore has not yet healed," said Jack. "Certainly you will have to reckon scores with Dennis sooner or

later, Will. Be watchful, for he will do you an injury in an underhand fashion if he gets the chance. And hark ye, if you think that he hath a leaning towards Mistress Rose, watch him with both eyes. You will have your work set, for Dennis Watson is an ugly customer at any time, being, I take it, both cruel and ingenious in his contrivances."

"Let him do his worst," I answered; "I will account for him in the end."

By this time we had come to Darrington and rode quietly up the village street until we came against the Vicarage, which is a plain, four-square house standing at the foot of Church Lane and communicating with the church by a path that leads through the Vicarage garden into the graveyard. Now, it being very late, and the whole village in quietness, we did not wish to make any great noise, so we stole round by the lane into the vicar's farmyard, across which we went very quietly, fastening our steeds to

the stable door meanwhile. There was a light shining through the lattice-work of the pantry, so that we judged Mistress Deborah to be awake. In this suspicion we were right, for presently, creeping up to the open lattice-work, we heard her soundly rating the cat, which in its haste to escape from the pantry had knocked over and spilt a bowl of cream.

"A plague on ye," said Mistress Deborah, "ye nasty good-for-nothing varmint, to waste all my cream that was meant for his Reverence's porridge in the morning! How am I to replace that, I would like to know, and not one of the cows yielding a quart a day? Sure there is nothing but worry and disappointment in this world!"

She was now close upon the lattices and, peeping through, we could see her. "She is just the same as ever," whispered Jack. "Let's tap the lattice and give her a fright."

Whereupon he let his fist fall with such

weight upon the lattice that Mistress Deborah uttered a scream and seemed likely to let fall her brass candlestick and leave herself in darkness.

"Mercy on us!" said she, "what's that? More work of the cat's, I warrant me. An Master John had been home, I should say 'twas him. Ah, poor Master John indeed. 'Tis a poor trade, fighting, and him his Reverence's only son too. Well, well, everybody to their likes."

"Ho, Deborah!" said Jack, in a deep voice, "Deborah!"

Now, Mistress Deborah no sooner heard her name pronounced than she whipped out of the pantry and flung open the kitchen door, so that in another instant she had seized Jack by the neck and was squeezing the breath out of his body.

"Ah!" quoth she, when she had welcomed him in this fashion. "As if I did not know your voice, Master John! I warrant me you

have come up to yon lattice a thousand and one times and said, 'Ho, Deborah!' in just those tones. And you are safe and sound and no bones broken! The Lord be thanked! Is the wars over, Master John, and did——"

"Good Deborah," said Jack, "ask me naught now, but let me to my father. Where is he—is he well?"

"Why, well enough but for a little cold in the nose, Master John, got by burying Gaffer Burton's grandchild t'other day—a wet, slushy day as ever I saw. Oh, why, he's in his own chamber, Master John, with his books; but you must tread soft, for his Reverence is like to be at his devotions."

"Come with me, Will," said Jack; and we passed through the kitchen to the room where the vicar kept his books and composed his sermons and saw such of his parishioners as called upon him. The door was a little way open, and a broad beam of light shone through the opening into the

hall. We stole quietly up to this and peeped through. True enough, Parson Drumbleforth was at his devotions, kneeling at a little desk with his great Prayer-book before him, and his white hair shining in the lamp-light. And just as we came within hearing he was praying for his son, who was there within a yard or two of him.

"And take care, good Lord, of my son Jack, who hath gone to the wars, and bring him back to me, who have naught but him left to love——"

"Father, father!" cried Jack, bursting in. "Here I am, father, back again, safe and sound."

And so I left them looking into each other's eyes, and went out and rode away in the darkness towards home.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE COMING NEAR OF WAR.

EVEN as I had expected, Philip Lisle consented willingly to give up his Rose to my keeping. From our first time of meeting there had been a kind of fellow-feeling 'twixt him and me, and we had grown to love each other in more than ordinary friendliness, so that he felt that I was to be trusted with his daughter's happiness. But neither he nor my mother would hear aught of marriage yet awhile. Better to wait, said they, even were it ten years, until the land was settled, than to marry in the midst of so much anxiety and trouble. For at any

time, said Philip, the tide of war might surge round us with flame and bloodshed, and things might occur which would be harder to cope with married than single. Better to wait until the land was at rest and we could marry with peace all around us.

So now there was a double inducement to me to long for the ending of the war, and I looked forward to the coming of peace with a hot impatience. But peace was not to come upon us for many a long day yet. With the advent of spring in that year, 1643, the rival armies began manœuvring once more, and both sides became active in soliciting help and assistance. The King had taken up his head-quarters at Oxford in readiness for the campaign, and had there gathered his army around him. Thither, ere spring was over, repaired Philip Lisle and Jack, having remained but a short time with us, and from them, at irregular intervals, came news of the war. At first their news

was not over good. The King lost Reading. But then came tidings of success. The royal army overcame its opponents at Roundway Down and laid siege to Bristol. By the end of June that great city was in the King's hands, and the counties of Devon, Somerset, Hampshire, and Wiltshire came under his power. The Parliamentarians began to lose heart. Hampden, one of their principal leaders, had been slain in a skirmish. The royal troops laid siege to Gloucester and seemed likely to take it. Everything looked rosy for the King's cause, and loyal people began to pluck up a good spirit. There was some serious talk amongst the Parliamentarians of a treaty, which no doubt would have been carried out but for the pressure put upon the Commons by the London crowds, who swarmed round the House and refused to have any treaty. Then however came reverses to the King's cause. The Earl

of Essex raised the siege of Gloucester. Turning away from that city he found the Royalist army barring his path at Newbury. A battle followed which neither side could claim. Essex continued his march. If it had not been for the fine powers of the Parliamentary infantry he would have suffered defeat, but the foot had been finely drilled and officered and withstood the fiery impulse of the Royalist charge with rock-like firmness. In this battle Falkland fell, weary, men said, of the war and its horrors. So matters stood after the battle of Newbury, each side being pretty much as it was before the campaign began.

But meanwhile there were other matters at work, as we heard through various channels. On the first day of July in that year the Synod known as the Westminster Assembly began to sit. It had two objects —to make England Presbyterian, and to bring the Scots to the help of the Parlia-

mentary army. Perhaps the latter was the real object, as Parson Drumbleforth said, and the former the means whereby it was to be achieved. For with the Scots it was a case of no Presbyterianism, no Scottish army. Then came the making of that famous matter the Solemn League and Covenant, which was signed by members of Parliament who thereby bound themselves to bring the religion of England, Scotland, and Ireland into conformity. This Solemn League and Covenant became everywhere the test of faithfulness to the Parliamentary cause. Its effect began to be seen at once. The fierce, persecuting spirit of the Presbyterian broke out on every side. Anything that savoured of Episcopacy was ruthlessly destroyed or mutilated. The Cross at Cheapside was broken to pieces and a similar fate soon overtook Charing Cross. The images, crucifixes, and altars of the ancient parish churches were destroyed; the

painted windows were broken, and the spirit of wanton mischief seemed to be let loose throughout the land. The Earl of Manchester went to Cambridge and drove out from the University all who refused to fall in with the Covenant. There had been much talk about the persecution of the King, but under the new *régime* men were not even permitted to think for themselves. Anything more intolerant of other men's opinions than the Presbyterianism of that day there could not be.

Now, however, rose up a new party, which combated the cruel intolerance of the Presbyterians, and finally vanquished it. The Independents, as they were called, were for liberty of conscience. They wanted it for themselves, and what they desired for themselves they were just enough to wish others to enjoy. They pleaded for full liberty for all men, Turks, Papists, Socinians, as for themselves. The Puritans, iron-

bound and rigid in their love of mere outward uniformity, regarded this new doctrine with horror. They wished to keep the three kingdoms under their own rule, and to stamp out every other form of worship than their own Presbyterianism. They cried out loudly at the teachings of the Independents, and complained that such a dangerous doctrine as liberty of conscience should have arisen from a body which in a sense formed part of themselves. But the doctrine of liberty steadily gained ground. It was not probable that the gloomy religion of Scotland would ever be forced upon the English people, and men who saw their parish churches mutilated and destroyed by the fanatics of the League and Covenant, gained from what they saw an unconquerable aversion to the system which it was attempted to force upon them.

Now, at this time there were really three forces fighting for the supremacy in England

—the King, the Presbyterians, and the Independents, and men who had eyes to see and ears to hear looked on at the three-cornered contest with eager hearts. The Parliamentary leaders on their side watched it with more than ordinary anxiety, for the new force, the Independents, lay in their own army under the command of that extraordinary farmer of Huntingdon, Oliver Cromwell. Whatever were this man's faults, and whatever his virtues—and both have been doubtless exaggerated by his friends and enemies—there was one thing about him in which he was great above all Englishmen, namely, his resolute determination not to allow the Presbyterians to stamp out national life and thought in this land which is our own. How he and his Ironsides put the Presbyterian power aside, and indirectly made for the restoration of the English spirit, you will see as this history advances. Already Cromwell was becoming

a power in the land. The counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Cambridge, Huntingdonshire, and Hertfordshire had at his instigation bound themselves together under the name of the Eastern Association. In August, 1643, the Earl of Manchester took command of the associated forces, Cromwell being really his guiding spirit. Then within these counties royalism was put down, and after beating the Royalist forces at Winceby on October 11, Cromwell held himself in readiness to attack the King's army in Yorkshire.

But in Yorkshire at that time men were for the King, and the Royalist forces were largely spread over the county. The Marquis of Newcastle had raised the siege of Hull, and had succeeded in establishing a fair degree of power in many important districts and centres. In Yorkshire, Sir Thomas Fairfax, commanding the Parliamentary troops, was making

a hard struggle to retain his ground, and was watching such towns as Leeds and Bradford, while at the same time he kept an eye on the fortified places, like Pontefract and Knaresborough. Little by little, however, Fairfax was being driven back, when an event happened which brought matters to a crisis. The Solemn League and Covenant was signed. A committee of Englishmen and Scotchmen were appointed to superintend the operations of the army. These arrangements duly carried out, the Scotch forces under the command of Leslie, Earl of Leven, crossed the border and advanced into Yorkshire. In June, 1644, Leven joined his forces to those of Manchester and Fairfax, and laid siege to the Marquis of Newcastle at York.

So now at last the red fire of war was close upon us, for the rival armies were, so to speak, but a stone's throw away. All day long we heard messages of some sort:

now that the Scots were fifty thousand strong and would infallibly sweep away the King and all his army; now that the Royalist troops were on the march northwards to relieve Newcastle at York; and now that ere four and twenty hours had passed we should hear the booming of the rival artillery. But we heard no news from Philip or Jack; nay, we had no news of them 'twixt January and June in that year 1644, so that we were oft anxious about their welfare, and wondered what had become of them. Those months indeed were remarkably trying ones to all of us, for my mother was anxious and afraid of the war coming our way, and Rose was troubled about her father, and Lucy fretted lest the enemy should shoot Ben in any of their skirmishes round Pontefract, which they seemed likely to besiege; and I was impatient and fretful, wishing that they would make an end of the matter, so that I might marry my dear one and live in peace

on my land. For it seemed a long time to wait for her, and I was more impatient every day, and wished Roundhead and Cavalier could adjust their differences more speedily than they seemed desirous of doing.

But perhaps none of us were so anxious and troubled at this time as worthy Ben Tuckett, who, by reason of his residence in Pontefract market-place, did hear much news on both sides of the question. For Ben never by word or deed let either party see that he favoured or disfavoured them, but talked little and listened much, saying in excuse that it is a deal better to be seen than to be heard, and that silence is pure gold, while speech is but ordinary silver. Nevertheless, whatever Ben heard he turned over in his mind with no little diligence, never forgetting anything nor letting any little matter slip. He mixed freely with men of both parties, each side curiously enough believing him to be one of them-

selves, and in this way he got to hear matters which ordinary folk did not hear of. But Master Ben's love of knowledge ere long brought him into much trouble and perplexity of mind, for he presently found out that the Parliamentary troops would certainly besiege the Castle, which was now strongly garrisoned and equipped by the Royalists under Colonel Lowther. This news was disquieting to a peaceable and quiet tradesman like Ben, for he could not help foreseeing there would be bullets and cannon-balls flying about the town, and sallies and skirmishes going on, and it occurred to him that a rough-handed soldiery might not be very nice about taking goods out of his shop without paying for what they took. What with thoughts like this and fears lest a stray bullet should some day find a billet in his brain as he stood at his shop door, poor Ben grew careworn and anxious-looking, and lost a good deal of his sleek appearance. But

he never abated one jot of his curiosity about coming events, and whenever he came over to Dale's Field he had always some fresh scrap of news for us, gleaned from Royalist or Parliamentarian. And whatever it was, there was always one burden to Ben's song concerning it—the war was coming upon us.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF MY RIDE WITH THE DESPATCHES.

AND now, whether I would or not, I was forced into active participation in this war which was being fought out 'twixt Englishman and Englishman, and made to take a part in it which I had never dreamt of playing.

It was the first day of July, 1644. A hot, cloudless day it had been, with never a speck on the sky that one could interpret into a sign of rain. We had got our hay in, and Timothy Grass and another man were busily engaged in thatching the two great stacks that we had built at the end of our stack-

yard. Early as it was, our corn was beginning to turn, and I looked forward to commencing harvest in three weeks' time, feeling sure that the oats would then be ready. We had had no rain during the hay-harvest, and I hoped that we should be similarly favoured during the corn-harvest. If only the war would keep away from us until we got our corn in, I felt it would be well.

I walked out with Rose that evening through the meadows leading towards Went Vale. Unconsciously my feet turned in the direction I had taken that spring morning long years before, when I set out for the ruined sheep-fold to find the stormcock's nest.

"It was the first time I had gone bird's-nesting that year," I said to Rose as we came upon the scene. "I remember how quickly I ran off when old Jacob told me about the stormcock's nest. It was in yonder tree; see, there is where I climbed up the trunk.

Up I climbed and down I fell, lighting on my thick skull. And then came an angel clad in a red hood and cloak, and singing as she came."

"And she found," said Rose, "a sturdy-looking boy, sitting upon the ground and rubbing the crown of his head with both hands. A boy who evidently liked not to have anything done for him, for when the angel, as you call her, wanted to help him he would have no help. Nay, in those days, Will, if I had offered to kiss you better, as we do with children, I think you would have refused."

"Did I refuse when you kissed me that day you went away with your father?"

"My father?" she said. "I wonder where he is, Will. And poor Jack? 'Tis a dreadful thing, this war, to separate loving hearts one from another."

"It is, Rose, for it is separating you from me. How long, I wonder, shall we have to

wait? Every moment seems a day, every day a year."

So talking, we went down into the valley and turned along to Wentbridge by the road along which I had passed that night I found Philip Lisle and Rose on the bridge. We stayed there talking a few minutes, and then went slowly up the hill towards Dale's Field. The Great North Road was quiet that night; quieter indeed than it had been for many weeks, for lately there had been a regular stream of folk along it in both directions. That night, however, we climbed the hill out of Wentbridge without passing or meeting aught more than a drover taking his cattle by easy stages to Doncaster.

"How quiet the road is to-night!" said Rose, as we came to the level against Dale's Field. "Listen, there is not a sound to be heard."

We stood still to listen. My ears, quick to hear anything in the open air,

caught the faint sound of a horse's gallop far off along the road.

"Yes, there is a horseman coming along," I said; "I can hear his horse's feet. He is a long way off yet—somewhere between Barnsdale and Wentbridge, I think."

"Let us stand under the trees here and watch him pass," said Rose; "I like to wait in the darkness when all is quiet, and hear the horse's feet come nearer and nearer along the highway."

We drew back into the shadow of the trees that overhang our barns, and waited, listening to the sound that came nearer and nearer, now sinking almost into silence as horse and rider dipped into some slight hollow, now growing louder as they climbed some little hill. After awhile we heard him coming down the road into Wentbridge; then the horse clattered loudly over the bridge, and the sounds grew fainter as his gallop dropped to a trot, and then to a walk as he

mounted the stiff hill we had just climbed. And at last we heard the panting and blowing of the tired animal as it came out upon the level road again, and its rider strove to spur it forward at top speed.

"Here he comes," said Rose, pointing through the dim light. "Poor horse, how tired it seems!"

Tired indeed the horse was, from the jaded way it stepped out. But what was the matter with the rider, who reeled in his saddle like a drunken man, clinging to it with one hand, while he grasped the reins with the other?

"On, good Diamond!" he was saying as he came abreast of us. "On, on, ere this devilish wound overcome me! O Heaven! how the blood runs yet! Diamond, I say——"

"Oh!" said Rose, clutching my arm. "See, he is falling!"

I started forward just in time to catch the

man as he rolled heavily from his saddle. He sank into my arms and I felt something wet and warm as my hand touched his breast. The poor horse stopped and stood panting and sighing in the middle of the road.

"Hold up, sir," I said. "My house is near by, let me help you into it."

"He has fainted!" cried Rose. "Oh, Will, carry him into the house. I will run before to warn them."

She ran on, and I lifted the man in my arms and bore him across the orchard, his horse following behind me like a dog. I laid the man down on the great settle and looked at him. He had indeed fainted, and there was blood on his clothes and on my hands where I had touched him. A young man he was, of handsome countenance, and dressed like a Royalist officer. I wondered while my mother was attending to him what he was doing in such a plight.

"He is coming round," said my mother. And presently he opened his eyes and looked at us.

"Do not speak, good sir," said my mother. "You are amongst friends. Lie still and let us do what we can for you."

And she began to cut away his garments to get at the wound, which she found to be a shot in the left shoulder, just high enough to have missed the heart. This she dressed and bandaged with rags and soft linen, so that the bleeding stopped and a little colour began to come into the man's white face.

"Rest you there, sir," said my mother. "We will not move you yet awhile, and we will put cushions under your shoulders to relieve the hard couch."

The man shook his head sadly.

"I thank you, mistress," said he, "warmly and truly, for you are a good Samaritan. But rest I cannot, for I must on and away at once. If only I had another horse!"

"Nay, sir," said my mother, "you cannot go forward to-night except at peril of your life. Be content to rest."

"I cannot, mistress," said he, trying to rise. "Even if I die for it I must on. I am losing time here now. Let me up and away."

"Sir," said I, "I would not keep you for a moment against your will, but I tell you plainly that if you mount again you will be a dead man ere you have ridden half a mile."

He looked at me with despairing eyes when I said this, and groaned sadly.

"Can I do aught to serve you?" I said.

He shook his head, but looked searchingly at me. "I do not know where I am," he said presently.

"You are in the house of William Dale, yeoman," I said. "I am he. If I can help you, tell me how." Then I bent lower and said in a low voice: "You look like a

Royalist; we are all Royalists here, and you may trust us."

"Ah!" said he. "Is that the truth, Master Dale? Do not mock me. I am near death, I believe."

"It is the truth," I answered. "See, yonder young lady is the daughter of Philip Lisle, who holds office under the King—you may know him?"

"Indeed I do, Master Dale," said he. "Well, I trust myself to your kindness, and more than myself. Look you—I am carrying despatches to the Marquis of Newcastle at York. He must have them to-night or 'twill go ill with him. And here I am, winged in this way by some vile padfoot five miles back. What can I do?"

But I knew what was to be done ere ever he had finished speaking.

"Be at peace, sir," I said; "I will carry the despatches to Lord Newcastle. Tell me what to do, and give me the packet and let

me go. It is now close upon eleven o'clock: I shall be in York by two."

"But you must avoid the enemy," he said. "They are surrounding him and you will have your work set. Well, here is the packet—prithee keep it safely. Say that Captain Trevor was bringing it and was shot on the highway. And so farewell, and——"

He had fainted again from over-exertion, and my mother and Rose came forward to help him. I put the packet into my coat and went out. My horse, a great beast that could carry me a whole day without tiring, was in his stall, and uttered a little cry of joy as I put my hand on his neck. I lighted the stable lanthorn and saddled and bridled him quickly. And then a thought struck me, and I took the saddle off again and pushed the packet between the leather and the padding. If I was caught they would search me thoroughly, but my horse's saddle might perchance escape.

I led Captain out into the paddock and went down to the house door and looked inside for a moment. My mother still bent over the wounded man. I beckoned Rose to me.

"Good-bye, my dear," I said, and kissed her. "Kiss my mother and Lucy for me."

And so I went out into the July night, the clasp of my sweetheart's arms and the pressure of her lips fresh in my mind. I opened the gate and led Captain on to the broad stretch of turf that runs alongside the highway. The gate swung to with a little clash as I put foot in stirrup and leapt into the saddle. "On, Captain, good horse!" I whispered, and away we shot out into the darkness like an arrow out of a bow. The hedges and trees flew by me: I turned in the saddle and saw the last gleam of the farmhouse lights through the orchard trees.

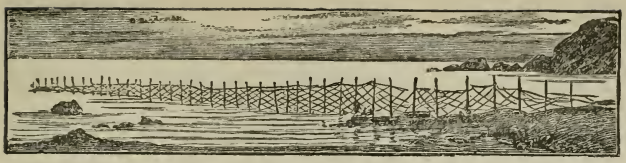
How we rode along that night! The great horse might have known what mission

he was upon. I can still feel the grand sweep of his legs as he went forward, the regular, smooth movement of his gallop as he tucked his great thighs under him for every stride. On and away we went past the Stapleton Woods that skirt the highway, down the road into Darrington village and up the hill beyond with hardly a break in the pace, along the highway past Grove and Cattle Laith, on into Ferrybridge, across the river, and up the long hill past Brotherton and Byram, and so into the great level plain that leads to York. A fierce, mad feeling of delight seemed to come over me as we swept along in that grand gallop. I laughed and shouted and the horse beneath me heard and answered with a merry neigh. I sang to him, praised him, called him many a pet name, leaned forward and patted his great neck and shoulders, and promised him such delights as horses care for. And still on he swept, now stretching away at a raking

gallop, now dropping into a trot, but never abating the speed that was drawing us nearer and nearer to York.

On, still on! Past Monk Frystone and Sherburn, through Barkston and Saxton, through Towton and Stretton, and so into Tadcaster ere yet it was an hour past midnight. I went steadily through the quiet little town, fearing lest some enemy should wonder at our great pace, but once outside we went on again past Bilbrough and Copmanthorpe until we came to Askham Bryan. And there I drew rein and pondered on what to do, for already the morning was beginning to break, and just before me the towers of the great Minster rose high in the dim light. I knew not where the Royalist forces were, nor where the enemy lay, and I feared to fall into the hands of the latter. But at last I went forward at a steady trot towards the city, intending, if I were questioned, to say that I was a farmer riding into

market. And having skirted the city a little I went in at last through Mickle Gate, having met with no opposition on that side, and presently drew rein at my old inn, the Swan, in Pavement. And there came a great surprise, for I had no sooner leaped from Captain's back than I saw Philip Lisle and Jack Drumbleforth leaning from an upper window in the courtyard, gazing at me with astonished faces.



CHAPTER IX.

OF THE GREAT FIGHT AT MARSTON MOOR.

IT WAS something more than surprised to see my two friends staring at me from their upper window, for I had no idea but that they were hundreds of miles away. Nevertheless, so heartily glad was I to see them where I had not expected to meet aught in the shape of friends, that I immediately called to them in a loud voice, bidding them come down to me quickly. And so they were presently at my side in the inn yard, shaking my hands and asking a hundred questions at once about the folks at home.

"But what brings thee here, Will?" asked Jack. "Art come to help us against the King's enemies?" There will be fighting in these parts ere the day is over, or I am a false prophet."

"I have ridden here on important business," I answered, and drawing them aside told them my story. "The letter," I said, "is safe in my horse's saddle. Let us take him into some stable and get it out."

"Nay," said Philip, "the city is in our hands and there is no fear of spying eyes."

So I took the packet from its hiding-place and handed it over to Philip, who having examined it, gave it as his opinion that it was from the King at Oxford.

"We must lose no time in delivering this," said he. "Let us stable your horse, Will, and then find Lord Newcastle's lodging. He is like to be in bed at this hour, but we will wake him quickly enough. Matters are

come to a crisis here, but now this despatch may give a new turn to affairs."

On going out again into the streets we found that the city was beginning to wake. Soldiers were hurrying about and the inn yards were noisy with the clank of armour and the stamping of horses. Men were making preparations for the day. Here a trooper was repairing his harness or putting a new edge to his sword; there a foot soldier was examining his matchlock. To me, who had never seen aught of war, it looked a strange sight, that preparation for bloodshed on the fair July morning, with the peaceful towers of the great Minster looking down on the quiet city.

When we came to Lord Newcastle's lodging, we found that the folks there were already astir, for men, richly attired, were passing in through the door and disappearing inside.

"Ah!" said Philip, "the Marquis hath called a council even at this early hour.

See, that is Sir William Wentworth that is just now entering, and yonder comes Sir William Langdale. Thy despatch, Will, if it be important, comes in good time."

We went into the hall of the house and there waited awhile until Sir William Langdale having entered the council-room, the doors were closed and a guard stationed before them.

"They have all arrived," said Philip; "I had thought there were more to come. The Marquis likes not interruptions, but we must make our business known."

And he spoke to an officer that just then passed across the hall, and whom he addressed as Colonel Eury.

"A despatch!" said the colonel, holding out his hand. "Give it to me and I will hand it to the Marquis. He hath the Prince and various commanders with him, but if the matter is important——"

"With your pardon, sir," I said, "I must

hand the packet to Lord Newcastle myself. That I solemnly promised to the officer that gave it to my care."

He looked at me for an instant, then nodded and went into the council-room.

"They will send for thee in, Will," whispered Jack. "Hold thy head high and speak up."

Now, I was not minded to go into the presence of a prince and of so many noble gentlemen, and would rather have handed the packet privately to Lord Newcastle. That, however, was not to be, for presently Colonel Eury appeared at the door and beckoned me. He drew me inside the doorway and paused with his hand on the curtains that shut it out from the room. Behind the curtains I heard many voices speaking. "What is your name, friend?" asked the colonel.

"William Dale, sir, a yeoman of Osgoldcross," I said.

He drew back the curtains and pushed me gently into the room. I found myself looking at a party of men seated round a great table, at which one sat with writings and charts spread out before him. All were richly attired and fully harnessed, but one sitting at the head of the table on a slightly raised seat attracted my notice at once. He was a man of fine presence, with a handsome face and bright, restless eyes. His hair, long and dark, fell in great rings over his shoulders. On his breast shone I know not how many crosses and shining stars, while from his left shoulder a broad band of blue passed across his breastplate. He looked up as I entered, and seemed to regard me with astonishment, for he gazed at me from head to foot and from foot to head again.

"Whom have we here?" he said.

Another officer, who had been bending over the table looking at a chart, looked up.

"Ah," said he, "the messenger you spoke of, Colonel Eury. Give me the packet, sir."

I held the packet in my fingers as I looked from one to another. "The packet, sir," I said, plucking up courage, "is for the Marquis of Newcastle, and I promised to give it into no other hands than his."

"That is right," he answered. "I am Lord Newcastle."

I bowed and gave him the letter. He sat down and opened it at the table. Before he had broken the last seal, however, he turned to me again.

"From whom did you receive this, Master Dale?" he asked.

"From Captain Trevor, sir."

"He was hurt, I think, and fell by your house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is that?"

"At Dale's Field, sir, four miles south of Ferrybridge."

"And you carried this packet straight on to York?"

"Yes, sir."

He seemed to consider a moment and then broke the seal. Another packet fell out of the cover, and with it a sheet of paper which the Marquis took up and read. Meanwhile the eyes of the officer at the head of the table were fixed on me.

"I like thy looks, Master Dale," said he, suddenly. "God's mercy! why, thou must be six foot four in thy stockings. Am I right, eh?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. "Only it is very nearly six foot five."

"Ah! a right bred Englishman indeed. Hast thou fought, then, for His Majesty?"

"No, sir," I answered. "At least, not as a soldier."

"And why not as a soldier with such thew and sinew as thine?"

"Why, sir," I answered reluctantly, "I

have an old mother and a young sister at home, and there is none to protect them if I went fighting. Nevertheless——"

"Well, nevertheless—go on, man."

"I should like to fight well enough," I said boldly.

"Ha! I believe you, Master Dale. You look—— Well, Marquis, what do you read there?"

"Little sir, that concerns myself. This packet encloses a second one, which I am commanded to forward to your Royal Highness."

"Ah! from His Majesty," said the Prince, and took the packet. "'Tis from the King at Oxford. Your pardon, gentlemen, while I read."

He opened the cover, and taking out the enclosure bent over it.

Colonel Eury, who had remained at my elbow, touched me on the arm. "You can withdraw now," he whispered.

I turned to go, but the Prince stayed me.

"Wait awhile, Master Dale," he said; "I want thee presently."

So I remained there while the Prince read his letter. Very soon he crushed the sheet together and turned to the officers around him.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "let us resume. I have here news from His Majesty which will bear weight. But, first, Marquis, tell us what you think. Do we fight or not?"

"I have already said, sir, that in my opinion it is not well for us to attempt anything yet upon the enemy. I hear there is some division amongst the generals of the Parliamentary forces, and prospect of their separation in a day or two. Again, in two days from now, Colonel Clavering will come in here from the north with three thousand men, and two thousand more are on their

way from various garrisons. Will it not be well to wait for this reinforcement?"

The other officers uttered murmurs of approval at this, nodding their heads as if in echo of Lord Newcastle's words.

"You think that wise counsel, gentlemen? Now, I have here positive and direct command from His Majesty to fight. We cannot go against that. Yes, to fight the enemy at once. So fight we must."

There was a brief silence after the Prince had spoken. Then the Marquis of Newcastle spoke again.

"I am ready and willing, sir," said he, "to obey your Highness as I would obey His Majesty, for I have no other desire than to do my duty as a loyal subject. What your Highness decides upon shall be done."

"Then I decide for fighting," said the Prince. "Nay, 'tis His Majesty that decides. Gentlemen, I doubt not we shall gain a

glorious victory. And now let us to our duties."

He rose from his chair as he spoke, and the others rising with him, fell into small groups and presently passed out talking one with another. The Marquis of Newcastle came across the chambers with bent head and grave face. He caught sight of me and paused.

"I have not forgotten you," he said. "You shall be rewarded for your pains in bringing the packet."

"Nay, my lord," I said. "I want naught. I did it to serve the King."

"I thank you, Master Dale," he said, and passed out.

The Prince stood talking to the officer at the table, who was rolling up his maps and papers.

"Ah, farmer," he said, suddenly breaking off his conversation, and advancing to me, "let me see—will you fight for the King

to-day? It will be a great victory—come, man, share the glory."

"I will, sir, if—— There are two friends of mine outside that are serving under your Highness. If I could be with them perhaps I should learn something of the manner."

"And who are they?" he asked.

"Philip Lisle, your Highness, and John Drumbleforth."

"Ah—I know them both. Well, William, get thee to Philip Lisle and tell him to take charge of thee, and I shall see thee strike a worthy blow to-day. God's mercy! we cannot spare stuff like thee at this time."

"Yes, sir," I said, and hurried out to tell Philip and Jack what had passed. I was eager to fly at the enemy, but Philip, when I told him what Lord Newcastle had advised, seemed grave and anxious.

"He is sage and wary in war," said he, "and Prince Rupert is fiery and headstrong. However—the die is cast. Yet there would

have been no harm in waiting for a day or two, for the five thousand extra troops would have meant much to us. And now let us see about finding you some harness, Will."

"It shall go hard to-day," said Jack, "if we three do not split some Roundhead skulls. Hah! I would give a good deal to win a great victory to-day."

There were a great many volunteers in the Prince's army, men who like myself were farmers and yeomen, and who were minded to fight for the King, and it was to one of these companies that Philip Lisle and Jack Drumbleforth belonged. Presently, therefore, they took me to their head-quarters and fitted me out with sword and breastplate, and with a great hat which had a gay plume in it, and this done we gave Captain an extra feed of corn so that he might be in good fettle, and the morning being then advanced, we went to such breakfast as we could get. This indeed was not stinted, for,

despite the siege, provisions in York were plentiful, full preparation having been made by the beleaguered army before the investment closed in.

Now, the novelty of my position and the pride called up in me—naturally, as I think—by Prince Rupert's admiration of my great figure, conspired to put away from my mind all thoughts of anything but the matter in hand. It never occurred to me that if I fell there would be a pretty to-do at Dale's Field. Nay, the thought of falling in the fight never occurred to me at all. I was young and strong and could hardly understand any one overcoming me. All I wanted was to get used to the swing of the long sword they had given me, and then to carve some record with it on the bodies of the rebels.

All that morning we stood to arms in readiness for the word of command. Bugles and trumpets were blowing all over the city;

every few minutes some hurried horse and its rider came through one or other of the city gates with news of the enemy. Men posted on the great tower of the Minster observed their movements and sent down reports. And at last, just before noon was striking from the city clocks, the word was given, and our army moved away through the gates in the direction of Marston.

It was a wonderful and a striking sight to see that army, the flower of the gallantry and loyalty of England, go out across the smiling land to fight. There were fourteen thousand foot and nine thousand horse, with twenty-five pieces of ordnance. The Prince led on the right wing of horse, which had in it twelve divisions, consisting of one hundred troops of fifty men each. Sir Charles Lucas and Colonel Hurry were in command of the left wing, and Generals Tilyard and Goring, with Major-General Bute and the Marquis of Newcastle, led on

the main body. We passed over the ferry at Poppleton and came on to the moor, from which the rebels at our approach hastily withdrew, so that we possessed ourselves of the greater part of the moor, and finally formed a long line extending from Marston village to Tockwith, the enemy meanwhile drawing up his force against us. Then those with me began to point out to me certain notable regiments of the Parliamentary army, such as that of General Cromwell, whose Ironsides were posted on the left wing, along with the regiment of Lord Manchester and the Scotch Horse. Upon these men, whose prowess had reached every one's ears by that time, I gazed with much interest, wondering how we should fare against them.

Now, by three o'clock both armies were fully formed for the battle, and there was general expectancy amongst all of us. Presently the great ordnance began to play

on both sides; but these monstrous cannon did little damage beyond driving up clouds of dust and soil, and before five o'clock they had ceased firing, following which there was a long interval, neither party caring to begin the attack, for between the two armies there was a deep ditch, which was equally disliked of both. It did seem indeed that we were to have no fighting that day, but at seven o'clock we saw Lord Manchester's foot advancing across the ditch, followed by the main body of the Parliamentary army, and so the battle began in dead earnest.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE PROGRESS OF THE FIGHT.

I DO not suppose it possible for any man who has not actually seen bloodshed and war to form a proper understanding of what happens when two armies meet to give each other battle. Never indeed could I have believed that war was one half so awful as I found it when, the signal having been given, the royal army and its enemy closed and men strove like furies to kill and slay on every side. The roar of the ordnance, the shouting of the commanders, the continual babel of shrieks, shouts, exclamations, and oaths which filled

the air, mingled with the groans and sobs of the wounded and dying, made an impression upon me which nothing has ever effaced. Add to this the sights which presently met one's eyes at every turn: blood flowing like water; here a man writhing in agony on the ground, there another just falling from his horse as the sword-thrust of his antagonist transfixed him; yonder, horses and men rolling in awful confusion together; in front, a comrade struck down in the very act of shouting defiance to the foe; behind, another falling as he encouraged his fellows to come on;—such were the horrors that I saw around me ere the fight had raged half an hour.

Our company was in the first division of Prince Rupert's Horse, and made a fine show, every man being well equipped and mounted, and apparently eager and anxious to fight. I sat between Jack Drumbleforth and Philip Lisle, being largely dependent

upon them for guidance in nice matters of wheeling and turning. My horse, Captain, comprehended, I think, the nature of our business, for he neighed and snuffed the wind, and pawed impatiently at the ground. As the shouting of the main body of the Roundheads, led by Lord Manchester, came along to us on the wind, he tugged impatiently at his bridle.

"We shall soon be at it now," said Jack, on my right. "Keep a firm bridle and a loose sword-arm, Will, until you are close in, and then let them have it, weight and all."

Prince Rupert, his eyes flashing as he dashed forward, came sweeping along our line on his great war-horse. Right over against us were posted General Cromwell's division of three hundred horse, looking like figures cut out of bronze and just as rock-like. We were to charge against these in front and flank, and the Prince was to lead

us himself. The words of command came short and sharp, and with a great cry of "God and the King!" we were galloping over the rough ground in a rattling mass of steel and iron that flashed and clanked in the bright sunlight. The great sword in my hand felt like a switch. The fast pace intoxicated me, a red mist sprang up before my eyes; I had no other desire but to kill, and kill, and kill again.

"Steady, Will, steady!" said Jack. "Now for the crush;" and the two wings met with a sound that echoed and tingled in my ears. But above it all I heard the cry of the Parliamentarians, "God with us!"

I could no more tell you of what happened in that first few moments than I could describe the battle of Creçy. It was all confusion and tumult to me. Shouts, screams, groans, yells of pain and fierce oaths as a sword went home, the neighing of frightened

horses and loud commands of the officers, made up an indescribable noise. When I came to my full senses I suddenly found myself as cool as if I were riding about in my own fields. I was slashing and stabbing and guarding with the rest of them, Jack at my right working away like a Trojan, while Philip Lisle on the left was fighting warily and coolly. Again and again we dashed on the front rank of the Ironsides, striving to break through them, but without success. They stood firm as a rock, giving thrust for thrust and cut for cut, and every now and then shouting out their battle-cry, "God with us!"

"They are like rocks," said Jack, breathless, as we drew together to dash at them once more. "Like rocks of iron."

The Prince, reckless and brave as a lion, was here and there in front and flank, encouraging and prompting his men. Beyond the Ironsides I saw a remarkable looking

man mounted on a hardy horse, very plainly accoutred, who gave his directions in a cool voice as if knowing well how they would be obeyed. "See yonder, that's Cromwell!" cried Jack, pointing to this man, and I looked again with wonder at the famous general. And then the two bodies closed once more, and once more we fought desperately to break the enemy's line. The fighting became looser; the steady phalanx broke up on each side, and cutting and slashing became general. The Ironsides began to ride at us instead of allowing us to ride at them. A great trooper rode headlong at me, shouting his battle-cry and poising his long keen blade to cut me off for ever. All my strength seemed to go into my arm and shoulder as I rose at him. My sword came down over his like a thunderbolt and shore its way through helmet and cap and head, while his own fell from his hand and rattled with him to the ground, where he lay a grim

corpse and the tide of war rolled over him.

"Well struck, Will!" shouted Jack, who was parrying and thrusting on his own behalf. "A great blow. Ah, sir, your lunge was too low."

His sword went straight through a man's breast and came out behind. The trooper threw up his arms and would have fallen, but the sword, firmly fixed, held him up, let Jack tug at it as he would. Another trooper rode up to cut Jack down, thinking him defenceless. I reached over and hit him so true and full on the breast-piece with my sword that he tumbled over his horse's crupper and lay kicking on the ground, while Jack tore his sword away from his antagonist, whose body immediately sank and was trampled into shapelessness by the hurrying crowd that pressed over it.

But the Ironsides, cool and intrepid, were breaking our ranks. Fast as a man fell

another closed in, and their grim shout waxed more and more triumphant. A great gap opened in our midst and they poured in amongst us, slashing and stabbing with terrible earnestness. A touch like lightning ran along my arm from shoulder to elbow, and I felt the hot blood run down it and saw it come trickling across the wrist. Jack at the same moment had his cheek cut open nearly from eye to mouth. But neither his opponent nor mine lived to make another stroke, for we cut them down ere ever they could raise their swords a second time. And yet the Ironsides swept on, and let Prince Rupert entreat and command as he would, he was powerless to stop the splendid work of those grim troopers, who did their work in silence, save when they opened their lips to shout forth the cry of "God with us!"

"We are beaten!" cried Philip Lisle. "See, Manchester has broken through our

foot and is pursuing them. Confusion! we shall lose the day without doubt."

"Look out, look out!" said Jack. "The Ironsides are on us again in new force. They ride like a whirlwind."

And like a whirlwind they did ride, destroying all that came in their way. Flanked by the Scotch Horse under General Leslie, they rode through us, sweeping our companies away like chaff before the storm. Many men lost heart and turned and fled before that awful onslaught. For myself, I felt my heart like to burst with grief and rage, and would have ridden amongst the enemy to kill some half-dozen of them before I was killed myself, but Jack seized my bridle and steered his horse and mine through the mass of our own men, who had turned tail and were flying towards York.

"'Tis all over there, man!" he cried, as I strove to detach my reins from his grasp.

"Let us where we shall be of some use. See, our left wing hath put the enemy to flight."

And indeed what had happened to our right wing was equally happening to the enemy's right, for Colonel Hurry had prevailed against them. At the beginning of the fight the Parliamentary troops under Sir Thomas Fairfax and Colonel Lambert were defeated, though Sir Thomas himself had fought his way with five or six troops through the Royalist army to his own left. And the brigade under Lord Fairfax, having given way, was further hampered by the cowardice of some newly raised regiments under Sir Thomas, which, being panic-stricken, turned and fled in confusion on the troops in their rear, whom they threw into disorder and trampled underfoot. The right wing of the rebels thereupon broke up and fled for miles across country in the direction of Tadcaster and Cawood, crying

as they went that all was lost. And so infectious was this panic that the other Parliamentary troops under Generals Manchester, Lever, and Fairfax gave way also, and were preparing to quit the field, when a sudden turn of fortune changed matters altogether.

For while our left wing was sweeping away the Parliamentary right, Cromwell came back from his pursuit of our right, and seeing the state of affairs, made haste to repair the damage. Sir Thomas Fairfax at the same moment rallied his horse, and Manchester's foot, returning from the chase of our troopers, got into order with the other two divisions and came on again to attack our left wing, which by that time had pursued the Parliamentary right as far as the baggage waggons. So here was the battle to be fought over again, just when each side thought it won, our left having been victorious while our right was defeated,

and the same thing having happened to the other side.

Now, Philip and Jack and I had wheeled away with several others when the Ironsides broke our ranks, and had gone over to our victorious left, so that when the rebels under Cromwell and Fairfax came on again to meet us, we fell in with a troop of horse and prepared to contest the matter once more. A fierce and terrible contest it would doubtless be, though there could hardly be more bloodshed, I thought, than had already taken place. For as we rode across the field, it was indeed pitiable to see the sights which met our eyes in every direction. Roundhead and Cavalier alike lay on the ground, dying or dead. Here a poor wretch implored us as we passed to dismount and put him out of his misery; there another with eyes starting from their sockets begged us to find him a drink of water. The dead lay in heaps in some places where the charge

had been thickest. Here and there the ground was literally torn up as if by the plough, and a hedge of dead and wounded on each side bore witness to where the cavalry had charged along and carried all before them. Horses, riderless, were galloping over the moor, some towards York and some towards Tadcaster, while others, apparently unconscious of the dreadful surroundings, cropped the herbage where it had not been trampled into waste. Over the whole field a mist of smoke seemed to hang, and far away in the twilight the great towers of York Minster rose towards heaven as if in witness against the scenes of violence on earth.

Neither Philip nor Jack nor I had come through the earlier part of the fight unscathed, for my arm was cut in a nasty manner and bled more than I liked, and Jack's face was covered with blood from the wound in his cheek, while Philip had

received a slash across the thick part of his sword-arm, which was fortunately not deep in extent. Nevertheless we went into the fight again side by side, resolved to do what lay in us to win the day for the King.

Now, that fight in the fast-falling shadows was twice more fierce and bloody than even the hot business of the afternoon had been. Our men fought well and bravely; yea, as the Prince himself said next day, no army could have fought more bravely. Many a time did we make ground and gain an advantageous position, only to be swept away again by these grim Ironsides, who rode on us to kill and slay without mercy, shouting their cry of "God with us!" For three hours the fortunes of the fight hung in the balance, but the superior tactics of the Parliamentary generals and the invincible powers of the troopers under Cromwell carried the day at last. There was no with-

standing the onslaught of these men, who rode together like a wall and swept away whatever opposed itself to them.

And so as the darkness came on the King's troops broke into hopeless confusion and fled away towards York, and the battle was over and we had lost. Philip and Jack and I were together till the end, and fought, I think, to the last. We spoke little as we rode into York that night, for we were dead beaten and our hearts were low within us. We had ridden out in the morning confident in our cause and hopeful of victory, and our cause was now in a worse state than ever, and victory was with the Parliamentarians. We had lost thousands of men, and the field looked more like a butcher's shambles than the peaceful fields of England. Sir William Wentworth was slain, and with him Sir William Langdale, Sir Thomas Metham, Sir William Lambton, Colonel Eury, and Colonel Slingsby. Sir Charles Lucas,

general of Lord Newcastle's horse, was a prisoner, and Generals Porter and Tilyard, with nearly three thousand rank and file, were in the hands of the enemy, who had also secured twenty-five pieces of ordnance, a hundred and thirty barrels of powder, and several thousand arms. It was a defeat signal and undoubted.

The next morning there were rumours of a strange nature in York. It was said that Lord Newcastle and his friends, dissatisfied with Prince Rupert's conduct, had resolved to leave the country and abandon all further part in the war. Nor was this rumour unfounded, for presently the Marquis set out for Scarborough, being conducted thither by a troop of horse, and accompanied by a distinguished company of officers and gentlemen who sailed with him from that port for Hamburg. It was sixteen years ere Lord Newcastle came into the land again, and then the Commonwealth was over and

Charles the Second had come to the throne. As for Prince Rupert, he too immediately summoned what force he could and marched out of York to the northward, where at twelve miles distance from the city he awaited the coming of Colonel Clavering and his three thousand men, and with them went away into Lancashire. In this way York was abandoned to the care of its own loyal citizens, who continued to defend it against the Parliamentary army.

Now, I knew not what to do when Philip and Jack announced their intention of following Prince Rupert, but after some thought I decided to return home. The harvest was coming on, and it behoved me to attend to my own business. So I took a regretful farewell of my two friends and rode away through the gates southward, hoping to get home without let or question of any man. But in this hope I was wrong, for I had not ridden two miles out of the city when

I was seized by a troop of Cromwell's Ironsides, who, in spite of all my remonstrances, carried me with them to the besiegers' camp, and there put me into safe keeping.

CHAPTER XI.

OF MY MEETING WITH GENERAL CROMWELL.

THE troopers into whose hands I had fallen were some twelve or fourteen in number, all of them sturdy fellows of the same type that I had seen so much of on the previous day. They were well mounted on strong serviceable horses, and had evidently been into the outlying villages in pursuit of fodder, for each man had a bundle of hay hanging from his saddle, while behind them came a peasant leading a load of straw, which was guarded on either side by more troopers.

"'Tis rather hard treatment, masters," I

said, when they had told me that I must go with them as a prisoner, "that you should thus arrest me who am going home to my farm twenty miles away with no other thought than of getting my harvest. Surely you do not war with peaceable folk."

"No, marry," said one who rode by my side, "you are right there, and it would best please us not to war with any one. But if I mistake not, friend, you yourself were fighting yesterday at Marston field. A man of your inches is not easily lost sight of nor forgotten."

"Yes," chimed in another, "'twas you, master, that slew Job Trotter. A great blow, that clove him through chin and chine."

"If I had not slain him he would have slain me," I answered.

"True, true," said an old, grey-headed trooper. "We say naught, friend, against you on that score. God knows 'tis much

pity that Englishmen should be killing Englishmen at this time. However, so it is, and prisoners we must make of our enemies whenever we can, for our own sake and defence."

"Why, sir," I said, "I am no man's enemy, I hope, save where there is need that I should be, and I am quite sure that if I cut one of you in two presently I should be ready to shake his hand afterward. 'Tis true I was fighting yesterday, but what then? I am loyal to the King, having never been taught any different. I hope I am not to be blamed for doing my duty."

"Nay," he answered, "I blame no man for doing his duty, for what is to blame in a man is not doing it."

Conversing in this manner we drew near to the Parliamentarian camp on the south-west side of York, which city they were still besieging, and did continue to besiege for fourteen days more. I was somewhat con-

Her son took her hand kindly.

"It was no scheming, or from no adventurous views, but self-preservation. I should have sunk. Some charitable uncle had left us fifty pounds a-piece. They spent all theirs out of hand; but I kept mine. And when theirs was gone, they came on me for my wretched scrap. But I refused. I wanted it for what would benefit them as well as me; but of course, being a herd, they could not understand that. We had an aunt who knew some 'nice' people, and used to go to Bath now and then,—a cold, selfish old maid. For years I had tried to get her to take me; for I knew I had good looks and good sense, and that once there I would have a chance. At last with some little money I had saved I had to bribe her, and she agreed. You know the rest. I triumphed over all difficalties, and got to Bath. Your father saw

me, and I married a *gentleman.* I did it myself, and in spite of all difficulties. He was rich then, though he died poor. For a poor helpless girl without money to carry out a plan of that sort and succeed seemed more impossible than what I want *you* to do."

Robert Bligh remained silent and thoughtful.

"Now will you make me a promise," she went on—"or two or three promises—that you will give up the Buller girl, as you call her, for the present?"

"My dearest mother," he said, cheerfully, "to be sure."

"Then, that you will work yourself with all your will and help me as far as you can in what I propose. I have prepared the way already. You know what privileged people mothers are. They are the only people tolerated in puffing their relations: they are admired for doing so. I have

had given orders they should be, when the shadow of a man fell right before me and rested there. I looked up and saw standing before me a tall, stout-built man in a somewhat faded doublet, who stood with hands behind him staring at me. He was naught particular to look upon, for his face was coarse and red, and his nose somewhat bottle-shaped, and upon his forehead there was a wart which gave him a strange appearance. Moreover, there were blotches and pimples all over his cheeks, and the hair of his beard and face grew in patches and tufts more than in regular fashion, so that he had naught of personal beauty to recommend him. But there was that about him which made me return his staring looks with interest, for he was surely the most remarkable man that I had ever set eyes on. Whether it was his entire bearing, or the set of his square mouth and chin, or the keen glance of his eye that made me wonder, I cannot

tell, being no scholar in these matters, but this I do know, he was a man whom no one could have looked at without wonder and admiration, for he was like what one fancies a king to be, namely, a master and leader of his people.

"Well, friend," said he, "what do you think of?"

His voice was somewhat harsh and rough, but not unkindly. I looked again at him and saw that he was measuring my height and breadth, which indeed were matters that all strangers were astonished at.

"Sir," I answered, "I was at that moment wondering if the folks at home have finished thatching our haystack, and if they have turned the sheep into a certain field."

"Peaceable thoughts," said he, and looked away across the camp towards Marston. "Yea, peaceable thoughts. Then you are a farmer?"

"A yeoman, sir."

"A yeoman, and a follower of the King? You were fighting in Rupert's army yesterday."

"Why, sir," I said, "surely I have as much right to fight for the King as you have to fight against him. I never knew otherwise than that men were to obey the King, as indeed it saith in Holy Scripture."

"Yea, yea," he answered, still staring at me. "I doubt not he hath followers of your sort. 'Tis your misfortune, master farmer, that you know no better."

"I have heard men say," I answered, "that liberty was impossible to Englishmen while the King reigned, but I never could believe that, because I have always had my own until now and once when Nicholas Pratt wrongly imprisoned me in his cellar. Besides, what is a king for, if we are not to obey him?"

"The King, friend, should be the high minister of the people—not a tyrant nor an

abuser of the nation's laws. If you are a true Englishman you should know that."

"I am a true Englishman enough, sir," I answered. "Otherwise I should not be here."

"How came you here, then?"

Now, I knew by that time who the man was, for I recognized him as the great leader I had seen yesterday—Oliver Cromwell himself. And knowing this I did not like to tell him how it was that I had come to York on the previous day, fearing that if I did so I should reveal some State secret or other and injure the King.

"Why, sir," I said, "I was brought in by the soldiers, a prisoner."

"Yea, because you are an enemy and therefore to be taken care of. But how came you here, and fighting against us yesterday, if you are so anxious about those hayricks at home?"

"Sir," I said, "I am a plain man and

know naught of politics, only what I am told by my betters. I was fighting here yesterday because I chanced to be yonder in York and was pressed into service, whereby I got this cut on my left arm and lost some blood."

"And slew certain of my troopers. Well, farmer, it would have been best for you to stay at home, and meddle not in these matters. And as to fighting for the King, why, man, you are fighting against your own liberties. Man, man, do you know what this England of ours will be when this is past? A fair land flowing with the milk and honey of peace, wherein every man shall have right and justice, and the poor shall no more be oppressed. And yet ye will set your faces against all that."

He was walking up and down before me as he spoke, his face twitching as if under some strong emotion, and his hands restlessly clasping and unclasping themselves behind

his back. His eyes were fixed on the ground, but there was such a far-away look in them, that I do not think he saw the daisies at his feet.

"Yes," he went on, "but there will be much tribulation first. Englishmen slaying Englishmen when they should have smitten hands in friendship. How long, how long? And even for us that were ordained to this mission there is bitter grief and travail. Mine own lad, and now my brother's son; why then, and not only ours, but many another man's children. Naught but blood, blood, wherever one turns!"

He was now standing still, with his face turned towards the city and his back to me, and I felt quite sure that he had entirely forgotten my presence, and was communing with himself. Presently, however, he turned on me again, and spoke once more.

"You have been in York this morning, friend. How fare they there? I hear that

Newcastle hath ridden away and left them, and that Rupert is on his way northward again. So do the rats leave the sinking ship."

"Sir," I said, "I do not know how they fare in York, and if I did I should not tell you. You would think poorly of me if I were to betray my own friends. Whether my side be wrong or right, I must cleave to it now."

He looked at me for a moment, and then walked away, his head bending forward over his breast, as if he were debating some great matter within himself, and so passed out of sight amongst the tents. A young gentleman who had lingered near now approached me, and entered into conversation. He was attired in the uniform of a King's officer, and seemed highly disconsolate at finding himself a prisoner in the Parliamentary camp.

"You have been talking to Cromwell," said he. "'Tis a strange man, and one that

I cannot understand. Do you think, friend, that he hath his senses in full possession? Have not these troubles somewhat turned his brain?"

"Why, sir," I answered, "so far as I can judge of him his brain must be a deal sounder than most men's are. I did not see him lose his head in the fight yesterday, and he talks sensibly enough, to my mind."

"'Tis a great and wonderful man," said the young gentleman. "A man, I begin to think, such as England hath not seen this long time. But see now, only last night, as I lay trying to sleep near yonder baggage-waggon, I saw him walking up and down, for his tent was near me, and he muttered and talked to himself like one possessed. Yea, and once I did hear him sigh sadly, like one in great sorrow, whereas he ought to have rejoiced over his victory. But what think you of these Roundheads?"

"They have only just laid hands upon me,

sir," I said, "and I therefore cannot say. They seem decent men, grave and sober, and rare soldiers."

"I tell thee what it is, friend," said the young officer, "these men will never be beaten. There is no rioting and drinking in the camp after a victory, as there would have been in ours. Indeed they think of naught else but pursuit of arms and sober talk about drill and tactics and such like. Yea, and you could see how they fought yesterday. Specially raised and trained and drilled they all are, and General Cromwell moves them all like one piece. The King hath no such soldiers as these. Is it true, friend, that Prince Rupert has gone northwards?"

"Yes, sir," I answered; "he marched away before noon, and Lord Newcastle hath gone to Scarborough with his friends, where he will take ship for the Continent."

"Alas!" said he. "If only Rupert had

taken Newcastle's advice yesterday! The Prince is brave as a lion, but he hath no judgment. They say he received a despatch from the King early yesterday morning, bidding him engage the enemy, but he showed it to none of the commanders. I wonder what these Roundheads will do with us now. 'Tis poor work being taken prisoner. I had as lief be killed and done with."

That, however, was not quite to my own liking, because a prisoner always has some chance of escape. As the night drew near I began to cast about me for some means of regaining my liberty, but saw none, for we were closely surrounded by guards, and I perceived no way of getting at my horse Captain, without whom I was not minded to stir a foot. So, as it grew to dusk, I made myself comfortable against a truss of hay, and fell asleep, my rest not even being disturbed by the noise of an occasional discharge

of the ordnance, which now and then fired a shot into the city. I know not how long I had slumbered in this manner, when one of the troopers who had brought me in awoke me by shaking my arm, and bade me follow him. I went after him towards a tent, from the door of which a light shone, given out by a lamp placed on a table, at which sat General Cromwell and another officer, whom I did not know then, but afterwards came to know well enough as Sir Thomas Fairfax. The latter was engaged in sealing a packet, and did not look up as I entered.

"Master farmer," said Cromwell, "you would like to get back to that hayrick you spoke of. Will you take a letter to Sir Richard Lowther at Pontefract Castle, and so get your liberty, and go home?"

"If it be not against the King, sir," I answered.

"I dare say the King is not mentioned in

it," said he. "'Tis a private letter from Sir Thomas here."

"Will you deliver it faithfully, friend?" asked the other officer, glancing hard at me. "You look trusty, I think."

"I will ride straight to the Castle with it, sir, if you will give me my own horse again," I said, and held out my hand for the packet.

"Give him his horse," said Cromwell, "and see him out of the camp."

He followed me to the curtain of the tent. "Go home, lad," said he; "go home, and do not come a-fighting again. The only son of thy mother, and she a widow! Go home, go home; there are enow of us that have lost children already."

He pushed me out into the darkness, and dropping the curtain, went inside the tent again, and left me wondering.

CHAPTER XII.

OF MY ADVENTURE AT THE WAYSIDE INN.

I WAS exceedingly well pleased to regain my liberty on such easy terms, and said so to the trooper who conducted me outside the camp, and who was the same grey-headed man that had brought me in earlier in the day. Also I was somewhat interested at the behaviour towards me of General Cromwell, whom I had previously imagined to be more likely to hang me from the nearest tree than to send me home again to my hayricks.

"You doubtless gained his favour, Master Dale," said the old trooper, "by telling him

that you had as much right to fight for the King as he had to fight against him. He liketh plain speaking, doth Master Oliver, whether it is in his own way or not. But it is not with such as you that our quarrel is. I dare say you do honestly fight for the King, knowing no better, and believing you do your duty thereby. Against that I have naught to say. But there are those about the King and in his army who do corrupt him with evil counsels, loving not the liberty and advantage of the nation, but rather thinking of their own selfish ends, and it is with these that our quarrel lies. Yea, and will lie until God hath swept them away from the face of the earth, and England is free again. And now, lad, you are outside the camp and can go without let or question, and so fare you well."

In this way I took leave of the enemy, and rode away through Askham Bryan towards Tadcaster, glad enough to be free

to go after my own affairs. My head was very full of my late adventures as I rode along. It was only forty-eight hours since I had left home, and yet I had seen in that time more than ever I had seen in all the previous years of my life. I had carried a despatch from the King to Prince Rupert and had heard a council held between the Prince and his generals, I had gone into battle and slain more than one man and got wounded myself, and I had been taken prisoner and had held parley with General Cromwell. Here was enough to make one think deeply, and I wondered what the people at home would say to it. Somehow it seemed a long, long time since I saw the farmhouse lights and the faces of those I loved. A whole age seemed to have gone by since I had ridden away on that errand to York. I wondered if the wounded officer still lay at our house, and if all had gone well since I left. I had seen enough of war

to make me satisfied, and I resolved as we sped homewards that in future I should stay where my duty required me to be rather than go forth to seek adventures. And yet I should have done the same thing again under similar circumstances. The villages along the roadside were busy enough even at that late hour of the evening. Fugitives of the Royalist army had fled or crept along the highway all day long, wounded and weary, and were filling the inns by which I passed. The road itself was thronged with carts and waggons filled with wounded men, going I know not whither. For the first few miles I was stopped more than once by Roundhead soldiers, who let me go on at once on seeing a passport I had received from General Cromwell. Of Royalist troops I saw none; they were apparently dispersed in other directions.

When I came to Aberford I determined to take the road which runs through Castle-

ford, rather than follow the usual route to Brotherton and Ferrybridge. This I decided upon for two reasons: first, the road through Castleford would take me in an almost straight line to Pontefract; and, second, it would probably be not so thronged as the other highway. So I went on and made good progress for a while, but before I had come to Kippax, Captain suddenly went dead lame and hobbled so sorely that I was forced to dismount and lead him by the bridle. Poor beast, he had gone through some sorely trying work since leaving home, and in addition to it had received a slight wound in his left shoulder from a pike-thrust aimed at him by one of the Roundhead foot. It was a most unfortunate matter, however, that he should fail me at this juncture, for I was then but five miles from Pontefract and eight from home, and should have been at Dale's Field in two hours if all had gone well.

There was nothing for it but to give Captain a rest, and I accordingly led him a little way further, to where the wayside inn stands at the four cross-roads beyond Kippax. That is a lonely house and hath no other cottage near it for some distance; indeed, the landlord there gets little custom, save from those who pass along that way, going from York to Castleford, or from Leeds to Selby, such being farmers and drovers with herds of sheep or cattle. The host at that time was one John Sanderson, a Pontefract man by birth, and a right good man for such a place, being brave and honest, as wayside landlords should be, for they have many dangers to confront, and more temptations to withstand than their fellows who live in towns or villages.

Honest John, when I went into the kitchen, was drinking his own health before the fire, which was not an unwelcome sight even in July, for the night was somewhat

chilly. There was another man seated on the long settle whom I did not know, but who seemed from his appearance to be a cattle-drover that had put up there for the night.

"God save us, Master Dale!" said John Sanderson. "Is it really you, and what are you doing here at this time o' night? Surely not from York market in these troublous times? Dear heart, the sight of wounded men that we have seen this day, and 'tis said that on the Sherburn road they be twice as thick."

"Ten times as thick, John, and that is why I chose this road. But hark ye, John, my horse has gone dead lame and can go no further. 'Tis a great pity, for I would gladly have got home as quick as may be."

"Let me see him," said John, and followed me into the yard. "'Tis not the best of times to put a horse into our stables, Master Will," he continued, when we were

clear of the house, "for there are all sorts of folks about, and my wits are that moydered that I know not how to keep an eye on right and left. Ah, I see it is Captain, that you bought from the Wakefield corn-miller, and a good horse 'tis. So ho, my lad, stand over! Yes, lame indeed, but an hour or two's rest, Master Will, an hour or two's rest, you see—why, 'twill put him to rights, I warrant."

"But if your stables are not safe, John? And, hark you, I would not now lose Captain for a hundred pounds, for he hath been in battle and behaved himself like a hero. See, he hath gotten a thrust from a pike-staff in his right shoulder to show for his pains."

"Lord, Master Will, and you have been fighting? Why, why; but now, William lad, do you bring Captain into our back kitchen, where we can keep an eye on him while he rests. There is enow straw on the

floor to bed half a dozen horses, for there were four wounded men slept in it last night, that were fleeing to Pontefract Castle, only they could get no further along the road. These be sad times indeed, Master William. A pike-thrust, quotha?"

So we had Captain into the outer kitchen, and gave him a feed of corn to comfort him, after which I went and sat against the fire in the front kitchen until such times as he should be sufficiently rested to go on his journey again. And, indeed, I myself was not sorry to rest me a while, for, eager as I was to get home again, the fatigue and excitement of the past two days and nights was beginning to tell upon me and make me sleepy. So there I sat on the long settle, the drover having gone to his bed during our absence, and talked to John Sanderson about the great fight of the previous day, news of which had come to him in fragments all day long.

"Yes, indeed, Master Will," said John, "we have had our ears warmed by this news, I warrant you. For some said that Prince Rupert and his army were cut to pieces, and that York was in flames, and Marston Moor sodden with blood. Ay, sad times indeed these be, William, of a surety."

"You would have thought so, John, if you had been where I was yesterday," I said, my mind dwelling on the faces of the dead men I had seen.

"Why," said he, "I dare say it was terrible work, and old Mother Robey that lives at Church Garforth yonder, she foretold that something would come to pass ere long. For she had dreams, she said, of blood, and of horses flying through the air, which meant, she said, ill tidings and great disaster, and she saw the King's crown fall from a pillar, all of which is sad things, Master Will, and disquieting to a sober man. Indeed, I know

not what the world is coming to nowadays."

So he went on talking, for he was glib of tongue, until his head began to nod, and presently he fell fast asleep in his chair, and left me sitting there alone in the inn kitchen. Sleep, too, was weighing down my own eyelids very heavily, and I could have stretched myself along the settle and fallen into slumber at once if it had not been for my anxiety about getting forward on my journey. However, that presently gave way under my great need of rest, and I was very soon as fast asleep as John Sanderson himself.

How long I slept I do not know, but when I awoke the fire had burnt very low, and there was a faint streak of grey light stealing in through the shutters. John Sanderson still snored heavily in his chair. I was rather cold and shivery, and was going to rise and draw the fire together, when I heard steps outside, followed by the pit-pat

of a horse's feet. A hand tapped at the door, and John not showing any sign of awaking, I went across the kitchen and undid the bolts. The morning light shone in fresh and strong as I threw the door open, and showed me the figure of a man standing outside the threshold, holding his horse by the bridle. He was turned away from me when the door opened, examining his beast's knees, which were cut as if by a fall, but at the sound he faced round and looked full at me.

Now, I had never seen the man in my life before, and did not know him from Adam, and I was therefore something more than surprised when he started away from me as if I had been a ghost. He held up one hand to shield himself, as though I had motioned to strike him, and there came over his face such a look of terrible fear as I never saw on any other human countenance.

"God save me!" said he. "'Tis himself!"

"What is the matter, friend?" I cried. "It would appear that my presence causes you some uneasiness. Do I look so very dreadful, then?"

Now, a great look of relief came over the man's face when I spoke, and he drew himself up from his frightened posture and stood staring at me curiously. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man of more than middle age, clad in clothes much stained with travelling, and wearing a large horseman's cloak over his shoulders. His hair was grey, and his face much scarred and seamed, as if he had seen all sorts of weather and taken not a few blows.

"Sir, sir," said he, stammering some words forth in his confusion, "I beg your pardon, sir—you looked—in fact, your honour gave me a great fright. You look so much like—some one I once knew."

He still stood and stared at me, examining my height and breadth, and glancing at my face as if he could not believe that I was other than a spirit. John Sanderson meanwhile had awoke and was standing behind me, looking at the stranger.

"Yes," said the man once more, "so much like some one I once knew."

"Marry," said John Sanderson, "then you knew his father, friend, for this is the very spit of him as he was. But 'tis cold work standing here, so come in, master, if you want good accommodation for man or beast."

The man tied his horse to a ring outside the porch, and followed us inside.

"I could eat some food," he said, "for I have ridden a long way since night, and the horse would do with a feed of corn."

"You shall have both," said John. "Plague on it! who would ha' thought the day was come already? Three o'clock, as I

am a living sinner. But then, 'tis light nearly all night now."

The stranger had taken his seat opposite me on the settle, and I noticed that he kept glancing at me in the same strangely curious fashion. I rose and went towards the outer kitchen, where Captain was still resting. The man's eyes followed me as I moved. I looked round and caught them fixed upon me.

"You seem interested in me, friend," I said, not exactly liking to be stared at in this manner.

"I ask your pardon," he answered. "I have not been in these parts for many years, and I knew a man then—perhaps it was your father, as the landlord said just now. I could have sworn you were he."

"And what made you afraid, then?"

"Because the man I took you for is dead," he said. "Come, master, you would have been afraid yourself if you had suddenly met

a man whom you fancied dead and buried these twelve years."

"I suppose I should," I answered, and went into the outer kitchen and led Captain forth. He seemed to have recovered by that time, and as I was anxious to be off, I laid down my reckoning for John Sanderson on the horse-block outside, and mounting my horse rode away out of the yard. Looking round at the gate, I saw the stranger staring at me from the window, one shutter of which he had put back to get another glimpse of me ere I departed. But as his queer fancies were naught to me, I rode away, and ere long drew rein at the Barbican in Pontefract, where I gave Sir Thomas Fairfax's letter into safe keeping for Sir Richard Lowther, and talked a while with the guard on what things I had seen at York and Marston. They would fain have kept me there for some time, so that I might tell them more news of the battle, but I was

anxious to be home, and presently set out again for Dale's Field, where I arrived just as old Jacob, always first to rise, was coming out on the doorstep to see how the morning air smelt.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE DEPARTURE OF CAPTAIN TREVOR.

NOW, although I had been away from home but a few days, I had in that short space of time passed through such strange and remarkable adventures that it seemed to me as though ages had elapsed since I had last seen the familiar faces that smiled in welcome at my return. I almost expected to hear that something wonderful had taken place during my absence, and felt, I think, surprised when Jacob Trusty told me that all was going on as usual, and that nothing worthy of notice had transpired while I had been away.

"Though indeed," said he, as he walked by my horse's side toward the stables, "since you left us, Master William, that rapscallion carpenter at Darrington hath again beaten his wife and made a beast of himself with strong drink, which, if the saying be true, is no news, being what he hath done many a time afore. However, he now lieth in the parish stocks, and hath been well pelted with mud and rotten eggs, so that he is paid for his naughtiness, say I; only thou seest, William, he had our new cart in hand, and now we must needs wait a while for it that was badly wanted. But other news than that there is none."

"What of the gentleman that I brought in wounded? Is he better, Jacob?"

"The women," said Jacob, "have coddled and nursed him, I promise you. What, he hath lived like a fighting cock, and is now able to move about again. Yea, yea, the young lasses do hover round him like a

parcel of hens round a young cock'ril. 'Tis a fine thing, I warrant ye, William, to wear the King's uniform, and fight in the wars."

"Why, for that matter, Jacob," I answered, "I have worn His Majesty's uniform while I have been away, and have not only fought but got wounded."

"What, thou hast fought, lad? With a sword, and in battle? And hast killed thy man, I warrant, eh?"

"I killed one or two poor fellows, Jacob," I said, sighing at the thought of the dead men's faces.

"God be praised!" said Jacob. "The King hath the less enemies. Yea, I will warrant thee for a right swashing blow. 'Twas I who taught thee, lad, eh? And John, our parson's son, did he kill his man too? Ay, ay, ay! Oh, if I had but been there to see it! Thank the Lord for all mercies, say I."

I was somewhat proud of my achieve-

ments, of which I had to give a full and particular account to my mother and the girls as soon as they appeared in the great kitchen to give me my breakfast. Not a jot of my story did they lose, nor did I spare any of the details save when their faces showed such signs of fear that I forbore to trouble them further. Glad indeed were they all three to see me back, and embraced me one and all as if I had returned from the dead instead of from so short a journey.

"But what of your guest, mother?" said I, when I had eaten and drunk and had delivered to Rose certain messages sent by her father. "Jacob tells me he can move about again and seems somewhat recovered."

"He kept his bed until yesterday afternoon," said Lucy, "and then came down into the garden a while. Such a white face as he has. You would not think that he had much fighting in him."

"He has been very ill," said my mother, "for he had lost a deal of blood, and I insisted on his keeping quiet. But he is now somewhat recovered, and will, please God, do well under my nursing. He has asked to see you, William, when you can find it convenient to attend him, for he heard of the battle yesterday and he is anxious to hear your news."

So I presently went up to the sick man's chamber and there told him all that I had seen and heard, he meanwhile listening with much sorrow that the King's cause had again suffered a defeat.

"This Cromwell, Master Dale," said he, "is showing himself such a leader that I fear me he will obtain the upper hand in this struggle. Time and again he beats us by sheer persistence in his own methods. Yea, I cannot see aught but defeat in this matter. Newcastle and his following, you say, have gone, and our forces are therefore

the weaker. Alas! and while men are wanted here I lie, helpless, and naught but a burden to you."

"As to that, sir," I hastened to say, "burden you are none, for we count ourselves happy in being able to serve you, and I am very sure that my mother will not let you out of her keeping until you are cured and sound."

And that indeed she would not, for it was her great delight to be nursing and healing of sick people, as all that neighbourhood knew. So, however impatient Captain Trevor was of the delay necessitated by his wound, he was bound to remain at Dale's Field until he was sound again, for my mother treated him like a child and prescribed and ordered for him just as she would have done for me or Lucy had we been in like case. Now and then her patient professed to repine at his cruel fate, but I do not think that there was much reality

in his sorrow, for he had all that man can want and was never lonely.

Our harvest began early that year, and it was nearly over by the middle of August, and Captain Trevor was still with us. He had then so far recovered from the effects of his wound that he was able to walk about the garden and orchard, and even into the harvest field, which he often did, accompanied by Rose and Lucy, who had not been behindhand in nursing him. These two, indeed, chiefly amused him and saw to his needs, for I was out all day in the land, and my mother was busily occupied about the house. These three, then, became great friends, and you might find them at any hour of the afternoon under one of the great apple trees in our orchard, the two maidens busy with their needles and the captain telling them stories of his adventures, of which he had a considerable store, having travelled in many lands and seen

much service. For myself, I was pleased that he and they should be thus diverted; but Ben Tuckett, coming one day and finding them thus engaged, was somewhat disturbed, and came straight to me with a face as long as a fiddle.

"It seems to me, Will," said worthy Benjamin, "that one of us two, or maybe both, had better look to our own business."

"That, Ben," said I, "is just what I am doing, for I have been in this barley-field since five o'clock this morning."

"A fig for the barley!" said he. "What has that to do with it? Oh, I know what these grand Cavalier soldiers are."

"Speak plainly, Ben."

"Why," said he, "here I come and find yonder fine gentleman, whom you picked up on the wayside, philandering under the apple trees with our two sweethearts. Body o' me! I like it not. Why, as I live, he

was rendering to them a sonnet that he had written this morning. A sonnet!"

"How will that hurt them, Ben? Let the lasses be amused. I do not think thou couldst write a sonnet."

"As to that," he answered, "I do not know. I could, I suppose, make eyes rhyme with skies, and dove with love, and so on, bur that is neither here nor there. I tell thee, Will, I like it not."

"Thou art a fool, Ben, to speak plainly, if thou thinkest that Lucy would give her heart to another man when she has given it to thee already. Fie upon thee, Ben! Why, thou shouldst trust her all in all."

"Yea," said he, looking somewhat ashamed of himself, "and so I do, Will, so I do. God knows I do, old Will—but then, thou seest 'tis this way. 'Tis such a handsome gentleman, this officer, and hath such a mighty pretty manner of talking, and cannot even

pass you a tankard of small beer without a bow and a compliment."

"And what of that, man?"

"Why, as thou knowest, I have none of these airs and graces. I do not remember that anybody ever said I was handsome, for indeed my nose it is a snub, and my hair is red, and I have thought that my left ear was somewhat longer than my right. And when I stand up beside this fine gentleman, Will, I am at a disadvantage. Thou knowest that maidens do notice these things, and I am afraid that Lucy should make comparisons between me and Captain Trevor."

"It is true," said I, musingly, "that thy nose is a snub."

"It is, it is," said he, turning very red. "Yes, it is, Will."

"And that thy hair is somewhat red in colour."

"Yes, yes; I said so just now."

"And as for thy ears, I have myself

noticed that one of them is bigger than the other."

"I know it," he groaned. "I thought somebody must have seen it."

"And then thy mouth," I continued, "is a good deal too wide, and one eye is set lower down in thy face than the other."

"Oh!"

"In short, Ben, thou art not beautiful, but very plain."

"Yes—as plain as a hayfork."

"But thou hast a good heart, and I think the women-folk who know thee could put up with right-down ugliness for the sake of it. What, man! you are a despairing lover."

So I rallied him, having no fears about my own sweetheart, whose heart, I knew without question, was mine and mine for ever. Nay, I think that if I had seen her amidst a crowd of gay gallants and each one paying compliments to her, it would not have troubled me, for she had given me her word

and nothing could have made me doubt her. And then, only the night before, as we walked under the orchard trees in the moonlight, I had teased her about this fine gentleman, and had been answered according to my wishes.

"You will think your poor Will but dull company," I said, "when Captain Trevor goes away from us. Can you not get him to teach me some of his accomplishments?"

"And what accomplishments would you learn?" she answered quickly. "Do you think, Will, that I should love you any the better if you could sing a French love-song or scribble a bad sonnet? It is you that I love, my dear, and you are enough."

And with that I was content, and if it had not been plenty, I had only to look into her dear eyes to read double assurance of the great love that she had for me. So you see that I was only amused when poor Ben came to me with his doubts and fears.

But while I had not found it possible to believe that either Lucy or Rose should fall in love with Captain Trevor, I had not calculated on the effect they might either of them produce on him. It did not occur to me that, thrown into their society as he was, he would naturally fall in love with one of them. And yet, considering that they were both good and beautiful maidens, I ought to have thought of it, and probably should have done if I had not been inexperienced in such matters.

The morning after Ben's complaint to me, Captain Trevor came up to my side, as I stood in the stackyard, and asked me to walk aside with him. I noticed that he looked somewhat careworn and haggard.

"Master Dale," said he, "I am going to leave you to-day."

"I am sorry, sir," I answered. "You do not look fit to ride yet awhile. I am afraid my mother will not let you go."

"Alas!" said he, smiling, "your good mother has spoiled me, I fear. Never, I think, has man had such kind treatment as I have had in this house."

"Then stay, sir," I said. "We shall be glad of your company as long as ever it pleases you to be with us. And you are not fit for service yet, I think."

"No," he answered. "No, I must lay up for a while yet. You are very kind. But it must not be."

He went away from me a little space and walked a while by himself under the apple trees, his head bowed and his hands clasped behind him, so that it seemed as if he were engaged in deep thought. But presently he came to me again and stood before me.

"Master Dale," said he, looking me frankly and honestly in the face, "why should I not tell you all that is in my mind? You have been so kind to me, you and yours, that it would seem wrong to me if I

did not open my heart to you. Do you know, Master Dale, it is not well for that same heart if I stay here!"

"No, sir?" I said, not understanding him.

"I have stayed too long," he said, "too long already. And I do not think that when I have gone I shall ever forget one that I shall leave behind."

Then my heart gave a great bound, for I knew what he meant, and for an instant something like fear came into it.

"Nay," said he, perhaps seeing the apprehension in my face, "nay, Master Dale, there is naught that need disturb you. She is yours, and she hath never had the slightest cause to suspect how it is with me. But who indeed could see her and not love her? Let that be my excuse."

Now, I knew not what to say, being inwardly much troubled that so honourable and gallant a gentleman should have given

his love where no love could be given back to him. And as I could find no words, being always very tongue-tied when I most wanted to speak, I held out my hand to him so that the grip of my fingers might tell him what I felt.

"And now," said he, after we had clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes for a moment, "and now, Master Dale, if you will have my horse saddled, I will ride away. I was loth to be stopped by you, but I am more loth to go."

And indeed he had hard work to get away from us, for my mother at first would not hear of his going, and the girls were very much cast down about it, having found him such good company. But he was firm in his resolution, and at last he had said farewell to each of us and to Jacob Trusty, and was mounted on his horse and at the gate. As for my mother, she had become so attached to him that she shed tears at his going, and

the maidens were not far from sharing in her grief.

"Let us go down to the gate to see him off," said I to Rose, and she went with me. "Give him a flower to put in his coat, Rose. He will remember us by it until it fades at least."

But I knew that he would keep for ever what came from her hands. She plucked a white rose from a bush that stood near and gave it to him, as he leaned from his horse to bid us farewell once more. He lifted it to his lips, like the gallant cavalier he was, and placed it above his heart. And then with one last word to us he rode away, and we stood watching him until he disappeared in the distance.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE FIRST SIEGE OF PONTEFRACT CASTLE.

BEN TUCKETT, I think, was somewhat comforted when he heard that Captain Trevor had ridden away, but he had hardly recovered his peace of mind when a fresh matter came to trouble him. This time it was not his heart that was threatened, but his pocket, and though Ben was a true and honest lover, he had a trader's liking for his broad pieces, and cared not to see his substance threatened, nor his trade likely to suffer injury.

It was Ben's way to come to me with all

his doubts and fears, and I felt sure that something had happened, or was about to happen, when I caught sight of him coming along the highway one morning about a week after Captain Trevor had left us. His head hung very low, and his face was so doleful that I wondered if there had been a fire in his shop, or if thieves had stolen his goods.

"Why, how now, Ben?" said I. "What fresh matter hath come to trouble thee? Thou lookest as if all the woes of the world were settling on thy shoulders."

"Alas, Will!" said he, and sat him down on the low wall that shuts out our fold from the house. "Alas! I think there is naught but trouble in this world. One down, and t'other comes on before you have got your wind again. Alas! and I had just painted my shop—three pound did it cost, honest money, hardly earned. Yes, three pound did I pay to John Simpson for painting of

it, and now I dare say shop and stock will be burnt up."

"What, is there a fire in the town?"

"Nay," said he, "but there will be fire—yea, and smoke and all."

"It strikes me, Ben, that your wits are gone a wool-gathering. What is all this talk of fire and smoke?"

"My wits are as sound as thine. What, man, have you not heard, then, that the Roundheads are going to besiege the Castle?"

"Yes, many a time during this last three years."

"Ay, but the investment hath begun. Colonel Sands fell in with a foraging party from the Castle yesterday, and killed some, captured others, took all the cattle, and made forty horse prisoners."

Now, this was news indeed, for though we had expected that Pontefract Castle would be besieged sooner or later, there

had been such delay in the commencement of active operations that we had begun to think the enemy were never coming to decisive action in the matter. This Colonel Sands, indeed, had been sent by the Parliamentarians to invest Pontefract Castle soon after the great fight at Marston Moor, but his force was so small that he had done little more than keep an eye on the motions of the garrison.

"And now," continued Ben, "they will be fighting and slaying night and day, and the soldiers will take what they please in the town without paying for it, and some of their bombs are sure to hit my shop, and perchance set it afire, and then where shall I be? Even if it is not set on fire, it will be dashed to pieces, which is just as bad."

However, as things turned out, Ben's sorrowful anticipations were not realized for another month or two, for Colonel Sands, getting no further reinforcement, was obliged

to content himself by sitting down before the Castle, and waiting until such time as help came to him. After a time the castles of Helmsley and Knaresborough fell, and the troops that had besieged them being thus set free to pursue other service, they came to Pontefract under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax, who early in December drove in the garrison, seized the town, and began a close investment of the Castle.

Now, at that time the Castle of Pontefract, which is now reduced to ruins, was one of the strongest fortresses in England, being almost impregnable on account of its situation. It was built upon a great rock, from the summits of which are to be seen most diversified views of the surrounding country. Looking towards the north-west you will see the valley of the Aire, which winds in and out through meadow and sand until it is lost in the far distance amongst the hills

of Craven. To the north and the north-east the land is flat, but extremely rich in woods, and beyond these rise the towers of York Minster. To the eastward, the Aire pursues its way towards the Humber, passing through a rolling country, and underneath the great hills of Brayton and Hambledon, which relieve the somewhat flat character of the land thereabouts. Southward the landscape presents a fine prospect of agricultural country, and to the south-west the hills of Derbyshire, in the neighbourhood of that great eminence which they call the Peak, rise up and shut out further prospect. How many villages and thorpes you may see from the height of this rock I cannot say; only I know that wherever you look you will catch sight of a grey spire peeping over the thick groves that shut in the red-roofed villages.

But if the prospect from the various towers and battlements was a fine one, the

Castle itself was not less worth seeing. In my school-days, indeed, I was never at a loss for something to look at and admire so long as I could run out of bounds to the great fortress built by the De Lacys so many hundred years before. There I have spent many an hour in company with Jack Drumbleforth and Ben Tuckett, gazing at the towers and the drawbridges and the barbicans, where a watch was kept for the coming of an enemy. Once or twice, too, I had been admitted within the Castle, and had wandered about it, wondering at it more and more with every step I took. For there were so many curious nooks and corners in it that it was just the sort of place a lad likes to spend an afternoon in, especially if he be fond, as I was, of aught appertaining to war. Later on, when I had grown up nearly to man's estate, I became more closely acquainted with the Castle, and did often go there to see certain friends of mine who

were attached to the garrison. Now, when I heard that General Fairfax had arrived in front of the Castle and intended besieging it, my first thought was that he would have naught but his pains for his gains, for the place was so exceeding strong, and so favoured by its natural position that I did not think any besieging force, however powerful, could dislodge a resolute garrison already in possession. I have told you that the Castle stood on a great rock, which, being raised to a considerable height, did tower high above the surrounding ground. Then there was a deep moat on the west side, and another on the east, and all round the battlements were towers from which active operations could be kept up against the enemy with great safety to the defenders. Round the great yard of the Castle stood seven larger towers, and beyond the western extremity of the yard was the keep, which was built of an extraordinary strength, as

the thickness of the ruined walls will show you to this day. As there was no high ground in the immediate neighbourhood of the Castle, the highest being Baghill, some little distance away, the besieging force was naturally at a disadvantage, and likely to lose more men in carrying out its operations than were the besieged, who could keep up a steady fire upon their enemies without exposing themselves to much danger. Nevertheless, by making a close investment, it was possible to starve the garrison into a surrender, and this was what General Fairfax prepared to do rather than to seize the Castle by sheer force of arms.

The investment had no sooner begun than life was lost on either side, the Parliamentarians, however, suffering much more considerably than the Royalists. The siege having closely begun on Christmas Day, 1644, the first skirmishes took place around the ancient church of All Saints, which

stands at the foot of the Castle on the west side. Now, the church was so valuable an outwork, both of security and defence, that certain of the besieged endeavoured to retain possession of it, and were soon resisted in that enterprise by the Parliamentarians, who came in strength and finally drove out the little garrison of the church, of whom they killed four men and wounded eleven. This victory, however, cost them dear, for the defence was kept up so gallantly that sixty of the attacking force were slain and forty more wounded.

After this preliminary engagement the siege went forward briskly enough, and at first the garrison had a distinct advantage and caused the Parliamentarians much annoyance by their steady fire from the towers of the Castle. Presently, however, Lord Fairfax, father of Sir Thomas, brought reinforcements to his son, and with him came the cannon which had been used at

the sieges of Helmsley and Knaresborough, so that the attacking force became well equipped for their work. Before they begun the erection of their batteries, however, Lord Fairfax despatched a message to Colonel Lowther, governor of the Castle, summoning him to surrender at once. To this epistle Colonel Lowther presently returned answer, that according to his allegiance he would defend the Castle to the utmost of his power, trusting to God and the virtue of his cause for assistance. After which there was no more to be said on either side, and the enemy, recognizing this, began their cannonade from several quickly constructed batteries, built on the rising ground all round the Castle, and in the space of the next three days they poured over one thousand balls into the walls and towers which they were anxious to destroy. So well were their guns laid, that on the 19th of January the Pix Tower, which was one of the seven that

surrounded the courtyard, fell down with a great noise and carried a portion of the Castle wall with it, whereby a breach was made and the besiegers' hopes of a speedy victory considerably heightened. It was then expected by the garrison that an assault would be made upon them, and their fear of this was increased when they saw the enemy's horse and foot drawn up as if in readiness to advance against them. The Governor, however, exhorted them with much confidence to the performance of their duty, and the whole garrison manned the towers and walls and made ready to defend their position with great cheerfulness. Lord Fairfax, however, thought it unwise to attempt an assault by way of the breach, and gave orders that the blockade should continue, so that the besieged might be starved into surrender. Shortly after this Lord Fairfax returned to York, leaving his son, Sir Thomas, in command, who in his turn was succeeded

immediately afterwards by Colonel Lambert, under whom the further operations were carried out.

The garrison did not suffer the breach to be widened, but hastened to repair the damage already done, and so well did they work that presently the hole was filled up again, and all fear of a sudden surprise removed. The Parliamentarians, however, seemed not to favour an assault, and soon began to mine in the neighbourhood of the towers. One mine came from the hospital at the east end of the Castle, and was made in the direction of the King's Tower. Another was begun in the house of one Ward, a burgess who lived near the Castle, and was directed towards the Round Tower. The besieged, however, speedily frustrated the designs of the enemy by sinking countermines, which ran from pits dug within the walls and proceeded in the direction of the besiegers' works. Of these mines there

were some hundred and thirty in and about the Castle, so that the ground in that quarter was like a honeycomb.

When February set in poor Ben Tuckett's fears began to be realized, for the garrison commenced a regular fire against the besiegers and considerable damage was done in various parts of the town. Several houses in Micklegate were reduced to ruins, and there was none safe from receiving a cannon-shot through its walls. Fresh horrors were added to this state of things when certain houses in Northgate, which had been occupied by the Parliamentarians, were set on fire and left to destruction. Then, indeed, did Ben's face grow long and sad, for he saw naught but ruin for him and his fellow traders, who loved not the presence of the Parliamentarian troops in their midst and would have given a good deal to see them march away. This desire, however, was anything but gratified, for reinforcements

kept coming into the town, so that the besieging force attained greater proportions.

Before the end of February the garrison were in dire straits for want of provisions, and the Governor, coming to the conclusion that he must soon be forced to capitulate unless help and supplies came, despatched messengers to the King, informing His Majesty of the condition they were in. This appeal was not in vain, for the King immediately despatched Sir Marmaduke Langdale with two thousand men to the assistance of the garrison at Pontefract. This army of succour came from Oxford by way of the Midlands and Doncaster, and passed our house at Dale's Field about three o'clock in the afternoon of March 1st. They marched on to Darrington and there turned aside to Carleton, forming finally in the Chequer Field, immediately in sight of the Castle, where they gave battle to the enemy at six o'clock in the evening, the beleaguered

garrison anxiously watching the progress of the fight. In this engagement the Royalists were victorious on every side, and the Parliamentarians were driven from the town and lost many men and a great quantity of arms. Sir Marmaduke Langdale, having pursued them as far as Ferrybridge, returned to the Castle at eleven o'clock that night, and was received with such gratitude as you may well conceive would be shown by a garrison which was already beginning to experience the pangs of hunger.

So, as Ben Tuckett joyfully said, the siege was over, having lasted little more than eight weeks, and the victory rested with the loyal garrison. No light victory was it either, for the Parliamentarians had lost five hundred killed and over one thousand prisoners, while the besieged had lost but a hundred men. The Royalists were overjoyed at the success of their cause at Pontefract, and Ben Tuckett had some thoughts

of putting on a cheerful countenance once more, but the gladness of both was considerably damped before many days were passed by the appearance of a great Parliamentary force, which gathered round the Castle and set itself to carry out a second siege.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE SECOND SIEGE OF PONTEFRACT CASTLE.

NOW, those who rejoiced that the investment of the Castle had come to so speedy an end were considerably disappointed when they found that Sir Marmaduke Langdale and his men were under the necessity of speedily retreating southward again, which they did in a few days, thus leaving the relieved garrison once more to the mercy of the Parliamentarians, who at once began collecting in the neighbourhood and preparing for another siege. But those few days of relief were made full use of by

the garrison, which set itself earnestly to the task of procuring such store of provision as should enable it to withstand further assaults of the enemy. Excursions were made every day into the surrounding country, and great stock of live and dead food exacted from the farmers in all the neighbouring villages. Here and there these contributions were given cheerfully, for the King had many followers in those parts; but the garrison, if they found any who were disposed to resist seizure, made a virtue of necessity and carried away grain or cattle without more to-do, and, indeed, the Parliamentarians did likewise. As for myself, I drove twelve good head of cattle into the Castle with my own hands, and moreover sent in twelve loads of my best wheat, for I had no mind to see those who were fighting for His Majesty reduced to starvation.

At this time it became a question with

me as to whether or no I should join the garrison, which was maintaining Pontefract Castle for the King. I was doing no good at home, for it was not a busy season, and I could do nothing single-handed against the Roundheads, who rode into my yard whenever they pleased and seized upon whatever they wanted, pig, horse, or cow. I had no fears on account of the women now, for the experiences of the first siege had shown me that the Parliamentary army was in the main sober and well-conducted, and zealously watched by its officers, so that no excess of any kind might occur. Moreover, my mother, who was exceedingly loyal and spent many an hour praying for the success of the King's cause, was all for me to go into the Castle and help its defenders, who, as I have previously told you, numbered amongst themselves some of the noblest and most honourable gentlemen of Yorkshire. But though my natural inclina-

tions were all for volunteering, I lingered in some slight indecision until Ben Tuckett, who was always showing himself in some curious light, prompted me to make up my mind quickly.

For Benjamin, presenting himself before us one afternoon in the middle of March, 1645, announced with no little pride that he was about to distinguish himself.

"Will," quoth he, as he stood before the fire in our great kitchen, and looked round upon all of us with commanding air, "Will, I am going to do a great thing. Nay, but I am indeed, and it will be well for you if you do take example by me. I am going to join the garrison in the Castle."

"Oh!" said Lucy, "he will be killed."

"I hope not," said Ben. "However, as well be killed inside as outside. It is no use attempting to do my own business with two armies fighting all round me. And between thee and me, Will, I love not these

Roundhead knaves. Faugh! I cannot abide them, I tell you. For they are for ever quoting Scripture unto me, and at the same time they will enter my shop and steal from it such goods as take their fancy, without so much as a 'by your leave.' So I am going into the Castle. What! there are four or five aldermen gone in already and have sworn to defend it. Can I do better than follow an alderman's example?"

"No, Ben, certainly you cannot do better."

"Why, then, I'll tell thee what I have done, Will. I have conveyed all my goods into the Castle and handed them over to the Governor for the use of the garrison, merely hinting to him that if ever the King should have his own again I shall expect some little trifling reward, such as a knighthood or a baronetcy. 'Tis no slight present I have made them, Mistress Dale, I assure you."

"I am sure you will have been kind to them, Ben," answered my mother.

"Yea, indeed I have," said Ben. "Twenty-four sacks of best flour, and sixteen York hams, all my stock of foreign spices and such-like things, with fruits and preserves, and all that had been left to me by those Roundhead rogues, who, to tell truth, did pillage me very unmercifully, and made matters worse by exhorting me to repentance. Well, I suppose I shall have my share of what I have carried in to the garrison. But there will be many mouths to fill, and 'tis said the Roundheads will starve us out in the end. I like not that word starvation. But what can a man do? I have already had one cannon-shot through my roof, and there will be more to follow it presently. And thou seest, Will, from what I can make out, a man is not so liable to accidents within the Castle — there are so many nooks and

corners where one can get out of the way of a bullet."

"Oh, fie, Master Ben!" said Rose. "You are surely not afraid of a bullet or two?"

"I am not afraid of ten thousand bullets," answered Ben, "if only they do not come near me. Why any man should want to stand in the way of a bullet I cannot think. Nay, I am hoping to come off with a whole skin, and shall be wise and prudent. But now, Will, are you going to join the garrison?"

"If I do, Ben, I am afraid I shall be constantly in the way of bullets."

"Oh," said he, "you were always ready for fighting. However, if you get shot, I will nurse you."

It was in this way that both Ben and myself joined the garrison at the beginning of the second siege, which began, as near as I can reckon it, about the 21st of March in that year. On that day a body of the Par-

liamentary forces took possession of the upper part of the town and engaged some of our troops in battle, whereby we lost one or two killed, while others were taken prisoners. For a while, however, the lower town was in our hands, and from it we drew further supplies of wood and provisions, thus strengthening ourselves more securely against the siege. It soon became evident to us that the Parliamentarians intended to force us to surrender by means of a blockade rather than by an assault. They commenced a regular series of entrenchments and outworks, and finally surrounded us with a complete circle of forts, guards, and trenches, from which their operations were zealously conducted. We did not suffer them to pursue the making of these works in peace, but continually hampered them with a heavy fire from our towers and battlements, so that there was hardly a day passed in which they did not suffer loss of their men.

Now, if I were to tell you all that happened during the time that I was in the Castle as one of its defenders, I should have to occupy your time somewhat more fully than you would expect, for there were fresh adventures every day, and from one reason or other I was always mixed up with them. Ben and I had joined the division of volunteers serving under Sir John Ramsden, and here we found some very good company, Mr. Shillito, the Mayor of Pontefract, being of us, together with Aldermen Lunn and Wilkinson and other gentlemen of the town, who had banded themselves together to defend the King's cause. None of us, I think, were disposed to allow the enemy to blockade us in peace, and we were always ready to sally forth and attack them in their trenches and works. Even Ben Tuckett, growing braver every day, did pluck up such spirit that he was never behindhand, and fought with as much bravery as the rest of us.

As for the sallies that we made from the Castle during the next few weeks, they were legion, and in every one of them the enemy came off second best, invariably losing a goodly number of men. On the 4th of April we went out, ninety strong, and charged against Alderman Rusby's house and killed an officer and three men, after which we set the house and barns on fire. The next day a great party of us, horse and foot, went out under Captains Walkington, Beale, and Smith, and had a brush with the enemy, during which we took two loads of fresh meat that were being carried into the town, and conveyed them safely into the Castle. On Easter Sunday a still greater body of us went out of the Swillington Tower and sallied up Northgate to attack the works situated there; while another party, equally large in numbers, went out from the lower gate and attacked the enemy's trenches on the south side of the town by

the Halfpenny house. In these encounters the Parliamentarians suffered considerably, for though we only lost two men ourselves, we killed one hundred and thirty of our enemies and took one man prisoner, together with a quantity of muskets and swords.

So the struggle went on, never a day passing that did not see some fresh development of hostilities. The Parliamentarians worked steadily at their trenches and forts and kept up a steady fire at us, and we on our part never ceased to harass and worry them by resolute sallies, in which we always came off with success. Indeed, upon some of these occasions we had a good deal to fight for, for our store of fresh meat was quickly exhausted, and if it had not been for our occasional seizure of cattle we should have had to go without any. Now and then, however, we caught sight of small herds being driven into the town, and on these occasions a body of us would sally forth and

fight for them, and we generally did so well that we brought the cattle safe into our courtyard and thus staved off starvation for a few days longer.

At these times nobody fought more keenly or fiercely than Ben Tuckett, whom necessity had succeeded in making a thorough man of war. He would rush upon the enemy with the most terrible cries and shouts, brandishing his sword so vigorously that the Roundheads often flew from him before he had well reached them. Then nobody would rejoice more than he did, and he would return to the Castle driving the captured cattle as if they were some great prize, as indeed they were, fresh meat being oft-times rare with us.

"You see, Will," said he one day, as we stood watching the enemy from the Barbican, "I cannot abide to see cattle going as it were by our very door when we have such need of it inside, and I feel that I must strike a blow

for the possession of it, or die. 'Tis such a terrible feeling, that hungering for a slice of good beef or mutton, and thou knowest there have been one or two days when we could not get even a thin shaving of either."

"There will be a good many days, Ben, in the time that is coming, when I dare say we shall be glad enough of a crust of dry bread."

"Alas!" said he. "'Tis sad to think of. However, what must be, must be. But when I think of thy mother's larder, Will, and what I have often seen it contain, alack! I am like to weep. Dost thou remember, for instance, the meat pasties that Lucy makes? I would give the King's crown for one of those meat pasties at this moment."

I laughed to hear him talk in that fashion, but there was something in what he said, for provisions were not great, and they had to be given out very carefully or else they would not have lasted many days. For myself I

cared little, for though I am a big man and have always been able to play a good part with knife and fork, I was never very nice about my food, and could satisfy my hunger on dry bread, whereas poor Ben had been so petted and pampered by the women that he had gotten a craving for all sorts of delicacies, and was for ever sighing after the flesh-pots of Egypt.

During April and May the siege went on as it had begun, the Parliamentarians surrounding us with a complete ring of trenches and forts, while we never ceased to harass them by our fire and by resolute sallies. They were constantly receiving reinforcements from various parts of the country. On the 18th of April six hundred Scotch arrived under the command of Colonel Montgomery, and received a warm reception from us, for we fired our cannon into their midst and killed several of their officers and men. On the 26th of the same month a

hundred and fifty men came over the high ground beyond Ferrybridge to join the Roundheads, and about a fortnight afterwards they were further strengthened by a troop of horse, which came from Doncaster and joined the main guard at the New Hall. Reinforcements indeed were constantly arriving, so that the number of our assailants became considerably increased, and we were completely surrounded by them on all sides. Nevertheless our spirits never drooped, nor did we relax our efforts, and our hopes of ultimate victory were raised by the good news which we occasionally received. On the 22nd of May the Governor received letters from the King and from Sir Marmaduke Langdale, by which we learnt that an army was coming to our relief, which news was heartily and gladly welcomed by us. Then we heard from the garrison besieged in Sandal Castle that it had secured a fresh supply of provisions and would be able to hold out yet awhile, and

from Scarborough Castle came news of a great sally there made by the besieged, who had driven away the Parliamentarians with great slaughter and had spiked all their cannon. This and other favourable news spurred us on to fresh endeavours, and raised our hope that we should be able to hold the Castle of Pontefract until help arrived. It was indeed only a question of food and provisions with us, for the place was so strong and so well fortified that an army of twenty thousand men could not have dislodged us unless hunger had come to help them in their work.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE EVIL NEWS FROM DALE'S FIELD.

NOW at midnight on the 27th of May, while I was sleeping in my quarters, there came to me Ben Tuckett, who had been on guard at the Barbican, and woke me somewhat hurriedly, saying that I must rise at once and go with him. Whereupon I rose from my bed, which was none of the softest, and began to rub the sleep out of my eyes, wondering what had happened.

"What is it, Ben?" said I, with a prodigious yawn between every word. "Hath the enemy departed, or are they going to assault us?"

"'Tis better news than that," he answered, "for there is prospect, lad, of fresh meat for many a day to come."

"Always thy stomach, Ben!"

"And why not?" he asked. "But hasten, Will, for here is Captain Wheatley, whom the Governor despatched to Sandal t'other day, just returned with good news. He hath brought fifty horsemen with him, and they have driven a herd of cattle before them, and are now guarding them outside the town while he contrives some means whereby to bring them inside the Castle. So hasten, lad, and let us help, for the cattle number over a hundred, and will stand us in fresh meat this many a day."

This was indeed good news, and I lost no time in arming myself and hastening into the great courtyard, where Captain Wheatley and the Governor were making plans for bringing the cattle in.

"How say you?" said the Governor, as

I drew near to them. "The cattle number one hundred and thirty, and are in the Chequer Field. We must make a bold bid for their possession. Let us see now how we can manage this matter. Come, Will Dale, you are a farmer and should have some good counsel for us. What do you say?"

Thus appealed to, I began to consider the matter, and having made myself familiar with it, I could do no better than suggest that Captain Wheatley should return to the cattle and drive them gently from the Chequer Field to the top of Baghill, and that, meanwhile, parties from the Castle should go out in various directions and prevent the enemy from interfering with our plans. This advice seemed good to the Governor, and Captain Wheatley presently went out of the Castle again and rode away to rejoin his booty, while the rest of us made preparations for carrying our project

to a happy end. We were at that time entirely bereft of fresh meat, and there was not a man amongst us that did not resolve to do all in his power to bring this valuable herd into the Castle.

Everything being in readiness, Captain Flood went out with fifty musketeers, and advanced towards Baghill, having orders not to enter the enemy's works, but to remain under the hill and direct a steady fire against the outposts. They were followed by Colonel Gilbreth and forty musketeers, who took their way to Primrose Close, under Baghill, where they dislodged the enemy from their trenches, and forced them to retreat. After them went Captain Smith, with thirty musketeers, who proceeded to Broad Lane End, and held the Roundheads in check at that point. A fourth party, under Captain Munroe, went out through the east gate, and took up a position against the enemy's works below the church, so that none of

them might come from the forts at Monkhill or New Hall.

When all this done and the enemy held in check all along the line, Captain Walker and a small body of men, amongst whom were Ben Tuckett and myself, went out through the closes beyond the church, and met the cattle, which were on the top of Baghill, guarded by Captain Wheatley and the fifty horsemen who had come with him from Sandal Castle. It was a dark night, and we could barely make out the presence of these unknown friends, but we had scarcely advanced close to them when I heard a voice which made the blood leap in my veins.

"I and my companion, master sergeant, are going forward with these beasts here, for we have letters for Colonel Lowther, and shall maybe stay with him when they are delivered. So back to Sandal with you we shall not."

"Jack! Jack!" I cried, for I knew his voice without doubt, "I am here, Jack, and so is Ben. What brings you here, and where is Philip Lisle?"

"Here, lad," answered Philip; and in another instant Ben and I were shaking hands with both of them, right glad to meet them again, though we could not see their faces in the darkness.

"We have ridden across country from Lancashire," said Philip, "with letters for Colonel Lowther, and fell in with this party from Sandal yesterday evening. But we will tell you more, lads, when we have helped you in with these cattle."

"Yea," said Ben, "let us get the cattle in first of all. I am glad indeed to see you, gentlemen, or to know you are there, for I cannot see you at all—but the prospect of roast meat! Alas! what shall we do if these cattle escape us?"

But the cattle did not escape us, for we

presently drove them down the hill towards the Castle gates, guiding them between the lines formed by our men, who were now keeping the enemy back by means of a smart fusilade. And though by over-hastiness we lost some thirty of them, which broke through and fell into the hands of the Roundheads, we succeeded in driving about a hundred into the Castle, whereupon our drums beat a retreat, and our men came in without having suffered any loss. Then indeed our spirits were raised to a high pitch, for we had now enough provision to last us a good while longer. Certain of our men, in order to testify to the general joy of the garrison, lighted bonfires on the towers, which made a brave show, while the gunners opened a brisk fire on the enemy, and kept it up for some considerable time.

During the following day Ben and I had many things to talk over with Philip Lisle and Jack Drumbleforth, and spent as much

time with them as we could spare from our duties. Both were much diverted at the thought of Ben turning soldier, and Jack rallied him no little on his martial air and gallant deeds.

"Why," said Ben, "indeed I see not why I should not be as great a warrior as any amongst you. 'Tis said that hunger will make a man do aught, and if that be true, I have reason enough to commit heroic acts. Alas! do you know, Master Lisle, I have lost nigh upon a stone of my weight since I came into this Castle! Yea, and can take my belt up three holes, which shows that I am naught like so bulky as I was."

"That is all the better for thee," said Jack.

"I am not so sure about it," said Ben. "A fat man is always comfortable, save in summer, and then 'tis his own fault if he is not, for there is a cool corner in every alehouse, and a shady side in every street.

Indeed, I cannot think of aught more delightful than being a well-fed, plump sort of man, with no care and a good appetite."

"Talking of appetites, Ben," said I, "the butcher hath killed some of the oxen this morning, and I dare say you will get a ration of beef ere the day is out."

"And well it will agree with me," he answered. "But now, lads, let me tell you something. 'Tis my birthday to-day, and I am minded to entertain ye all. What say you if we put our rations together and have a decent roast? The butcher, I dare say, would cut it for us all in one piece. And hark ye, gentlemen, I have a small cask of Burgundy hidden away close by, so that you can wash your meat down with something better than small ale."

"Agreed, Ben!" we all cried, and wished him long life and happiness, so that he went away mighty pleased, to make arrangements

for his little feast and persuade the butcher to cut him a piece out of the sirloin. He was very busy all that day until supper-time, when he fetched us into a little apartment in the Pix Tower, where he had set out the birthday feast for our entertainment.

"'Tis not a very fine banquet, gentlemen," said honest Ben, "for, as you see, there is naught but the beef and this loaf of wheaten bread and yonder bit of cheese, which came from my own shop when we fled to the Castle. However, here is the little cask of wine, which hath been hidden in a nice cool place, I assure you. So now, lads, sit down and fall to."

This we did with a right good will, for food was not over plentiful with us in the Castle at that time, and much eating of salt meats had whetted our appetites for something newly killed. As for Philip and Jack, they had not experienced over-good times during their recent adventures, and were

hardly behind us in prowess with knife and fork. Wherefore in half an hour the table was cleared of food and we had naught to contemplate but the diligently scraped bone of the beef.

"Ah!" said Ben, "what a beautiful thing is a piece of fresh meat! And what a spirit it doth put into a man! I feel as if I could go forth and fight every Roundhead that ever was born, including Cromwell himself. However, I am not on duty to-night, and am well content to sit here, gentlemen, with my pipe of tobacco and my pot of wine—I could not lay hand on any glass, Master Lisle—and hearken to the lads outside firing at the crop-eared knaves that besiege us. But now, Master Lisle, what do you think of these matters? Which will prevail, Roundhead or Cavalier?"

"Nay, Ben," said Philip, "'tis more than I can say. The prospect is not over promising for us at present, I think, for the

Parliamentarians are more resolved than ever. And yet I cannot think that this people of England will throw down the monarchy altogether. Thrown down for a season it may be—but if Charles the First is deposed, Charles the Second will reign in his stead."

"Alas!" said Ben, "we are in a pretty coil. But come, lads, 'tis my birthday, so let us be merry. We shall have time enow for sorrow to-morrow. Jack, lad, give us a song. Such as you used to sing in the old days when neither Roundhead nor Cavalier vexed our souls."

"Yes, give us a song, Jack," said I. "It seems an age since I heard your voice."

"I have but a poor voice," said Jack, "for it hath had little practice of late and is grown rusty. However, you shall have a little song that I made one night recently as I sat by the camp-fire."

He filled his mug with wine from the

cask, and having drank, gave us the following verses :—

"Pledge me, pledge me, Phyllis mine,
In this cup of rosy wine!
Drink to Life, to Love, to Laughter,
Drink to everything that's jolly,
Hence with time and the hereafter,
And with aught that's melancholy.
Let's drive forth all care and sorrow
To the never-born to-morrow.

"Kiss me, kiss me, Phyllis mine,
While my eyes look into thine!
There I see two laughing fairies
Full of love and mischief making,
Whose emotion quickly varies,
Now with roguish laughter shaking,
Then with sudden seriousness
Asking for a long caress.

"Pledge me, pledge me, Phyllis mine,
While the liquor leaps divine!
Wreath the cups with showers of roses,
White and red and pink and yellow,
Weave them into fragrant posies
Round about the wine so mellow,
That with flowers and song we may
Lie and laugh the whole spring day.

"Pledge me, pledge me, Phyllis mine,
While the April skies are fine!
Spring's the time for love and laughing,
Tender glance and shy caresses;
Wherefore let's the bowl be quaffing
While the sun through these bright tresses
Shoots his amorous beams and tries
To catch the gold that in them lies."

We had barely ceased applauding Jack's song, when a knock came at our door and a voice inquired if Master Dale stayed within.

"'Tis Belwether's voice," said Ben. "He has returned from Newark. Come in, Master Belwether, and drink my health. We are having a party in honour of my birthday. Nay, man, be not bashful. Sit thee down and drink off thy pot."

"Your good health, Master Tuckett," said Belwether. "Nay, gentlemen, I had no idea of what you were at, but, as you know, the Governor sent me to Newark t'other day, and I am just come in again, and did wish

for Master Dale there so that I could give him a letter that his mother entrusted to my care as I passed Dale's Field an hour ago."

"Are they all well there?" I asked, as he gave me the letter. "Indeed I am beholden to you for this service. We had had no news of them for a fortnight, had we, Ben?"

"Open thy letter and read," said Ben. "Master Belwether, another pot of wine for thy good news. Now, Will, read it aloud."

But I had gone to the light and was reading the letter before he spoke, and all of a sudden I let the sheet fall from my hand and fell back against the wall, overwhelmed by the evil tidings I saw there.

"Bad news!" cried Jack, and seized me, while Ben picked up the letter and the other two came to my side.

"Let me be, Jack—see, I am all right

again. Read, read, Ben, 'tis bad news indeed."

It was but a short letter from my mother, telling me that all was well with them, but that three days earlier two messengers had arrived at Dale's Field, bringing note from Philip Lisle to Rose, saying that he lay wounded to death in Derbyshire and begging her to go to him at once. Whereupon, under the escort of the two messengers, she had set out in obedience to her father's dying wish. That was all.

We looked into each other's faces as Ben finished, and each saw dismay and fear on the other's countenance. "Villany, villany," muttered Jack. "The father is here, alive and well. Who hath done it!"

So we stood for a moment until Philip Lisle seized my arm and dragged me from the room. "We must follow!" said he. "Would God we had known of this three days ago!" And so presently we were on

our horses and stealing through the enemy's lines, and once clear of them we headed for Dale's Field as fast as our steeds could carry us.

END OF VOL. II.

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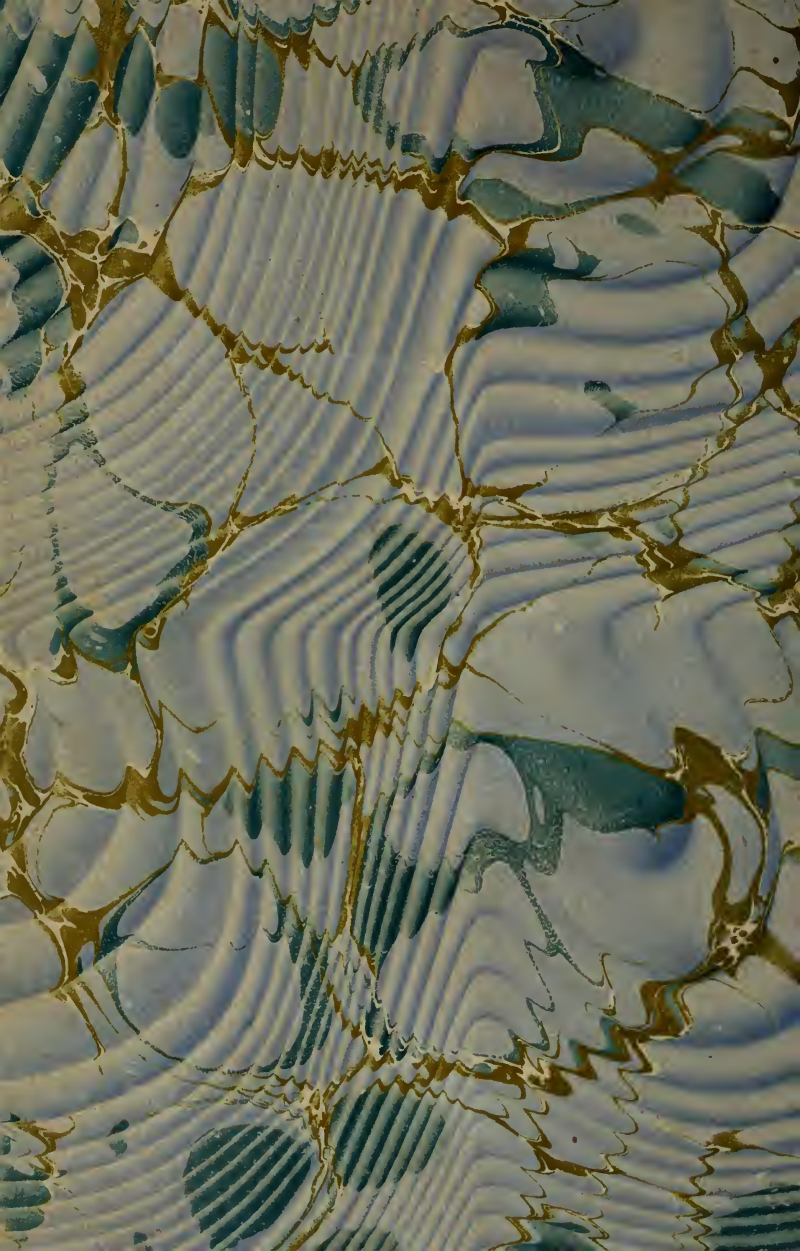

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